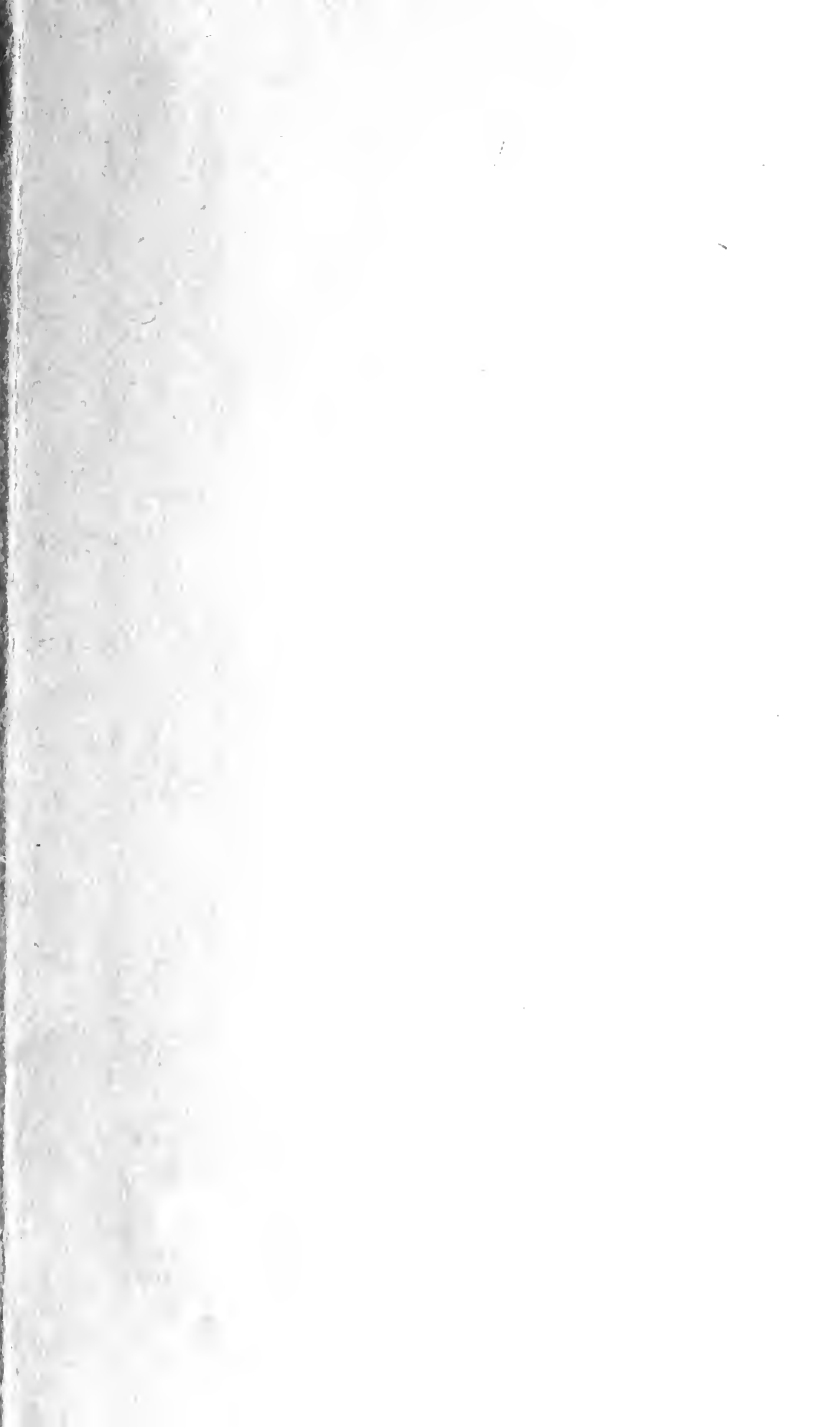




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THE GAMBLER'S WIFE.

Nearly ready,

In 2 vols. post 8vo.

A N T I - C O N I N G S B Y ;

OR,

THE NEW GENERATION GROWN OLD.

BY AN EMBRYO M. P.

“ Who'll exchange old lamps for new.”

Amos-Hermann

Edw. Cayman (Cayman)

THE GAMBLER'S WIFE.

A NOVEL.

Mrs. Kelly

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE YOUNG PRIMA DONNA," "THE BELLE OF THE
FAMILY," "THE OLD DOWER HOUSE," &c.

"A man in all the world's new fashion planted,
That hath a mint of phrases in his brain—
One, whom the music of his own vain tongue
Doth ravish—like enchanting harmony—
A man of compliments——"

LOVE'S LABOUR LOST.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE GAMBLER'S WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

" Were honor to be scanned by long descent,
From ancestors illustrious, I could vaunt
A lineage of the greatest——."

ROWE.

It was on a lovely evening in the month of August, that young Arthur Balfour, having gladly forsaken the noise, glare, and confusion of a London season, entered the splendid domain of Sutherland Manor. His father and

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the present proprietor of this lovely spot, were cousins.—Orphans from infancy, they had been brought up as brothers, under the care of their grandfather, who lavished the most tender affection on the two boys, rendered still more precious, from being the only scions of a house, of which he was not a little proud,—and certainly for antiquity and honor, it ranked amongst the first of the commoners in the land. The two boys grew to manhood—and with increased pride and delight, did the old man regard the noble youths destined to perpetuate his ancient name.

A severe blow which greatly wounded that pride, was however soon inflicted by one of them, for Arthur, the eldest—married!—

And was it some low-born damsel who was to contaminate the gentle blood of the Sutherlands? No—he wed the only daughter of a Peer—but it was the idea, that a Sutherland should submit to give up that name, which caused the offended blood to rush into the old

man's face — the name for which heroes had fought and bled ! — to take another in order to induce a haughty Earl to stoop to give his daughter to a commoner ! — He was thankful he was not his heir, but the child of his youngest son ; still there were but too few Sutherlands remaining to afford to lose even one — broad lands would also have been his — but no mortal, not possessing the name of Sutherland, should ever own a rood of the estate. —

Five years after this event — Mark Sutherland on whom the whole weight of the affection of the grandfather had now fallen, increased it tenfold by choosing a wife, who for virtue, family and beauty, was worthy of the house she had entered — moreover — whose parents were not unmindful of the eligibility of her marriage. Some years of this happy union passed away, and the health of the elder Mr. Sutherland gradually declined. Fain would he have seen a son of his grandson, sporting in his Halls,

before he was “gathered to his fathers ;”—but two fair girls alone clung to his knee and gambolled by his side.—still they were Sutherlands, and though many more great-grand children might yet be born to him, he could even contemplate with satisfaction, the whole power and dignity of his house, being on some future day vested in the person of the lovely little Maud ; for a female had before swayed its honors, without diminution of its prosperity ; the heiress being also privileged to retain her maiden name, and to bestow it on the husband of her choice—and when the young Arthur Balfour was sent an orphan to Sutherland Manor, and was received and cherished by his venerable relative with the tenderest affection, the death of his father having banished from the breast of the kind old man every feeling of resentment, still the noble boy, in no degree robbed his baby *lady* cousins, of their rank in his consideration, for Arthur was not a Sutherland ! Mark however sometimes conceived the erro-

neous idea, that a feeling of regret lurked in the heart of his grandfather, at the probability of a female succeeding to his venerated estate. His character was noble and disinterested, and it was with sincerity, that he constantly suggested the expediency of securing the inheritance to his young cousin.

He would often say—"I already love Arthur as my son, and to speak the truth, I have ever had a strong prejudice in favour of the Salic law."

The old man however would gently reprove him for this sentiment, and always firmly opposed the proposition.

It was after an amicable argument upon this subject, a few days previous to his leaving the Manor for London, to try the aid of the best medical advice, urged by the entreaties of those around him — that having for some time watched with a thoughtful smile, the gentle attentions of Arthur to the little girls, as they

gambolled before him, Mr. Sutherland suddenly exclaimed—

“Remember Mark ! Maud must be your heiress, unless you have a son. Arthur is indeed a noble boy, and would be an ornament to the name of which he was deprived by his poor father's fault ; but such a fault was too great to be overlooked in the manner you propose. No ! — if ever he resume the name of Sutherland, let it be for the sake of becoming the husband of little Maud. Ah ! pretty May”, he exclaimed, “ it is not of you I am speaking, so you need not stroke his cheek, and look so lovingly in his bright eyes. And you,” he added turning to the mother of the beautiful girls, “ will you, dearest Mary, promise to use your influence with your daughter, in favor of this young lover, and give me the hope, that hereafter my wishes may be fulfilled.”

“ If,” Mrs. Sutherland smilingly replied, fixing her large dark eyes with fond admiration on the handsome boy, who was warmly defend-

ing his gentler companion, from the rather overbearing authority of his *intended wife*, "if he change not greatly, I think much influence on my part will scarcely be required. May your wish be accomplished my dear Sir," she continued, "but I confess that I should ever shrink from influencing the inclinations of my children on the subject of marriage," and Mrs. Sutherland looked at her husband, as if wishing to hear him express his concurrence in her sentiment.

"To tell you the truth," he observed smiling, "I do not think there is much chance of Miss Maud's ever allowing her will to be opposed by any one, more than she can possibly avoid. See how she already lords it over poor, gentle, little May, who on the contrary, looks as if her will, would ever be that of those she loves. I do not promise poor Arthur an easy life, if he is to be under the dominion of those bright eyes."

"Ah, she will be a splendid creature!" re-

plied the old man, " but do not spoil her. Far be it from me, to wish that noble spirit, which so well becomes a Sutherland, broken, or severely curbed ; but those restless orbs, and that fiery brow, already betoken a temper, which will require much judicious management. And remember, my dear Mary, that a meek and gentle spirit, is the loveliest attribute of a woman—of every age—of every station ; from the Queen on her throne, to the peasant in her lowly dwelling — think of what I say my dear children, when the old man is in his grave, and train up these two sweet girls with judicious firmness, suiting the treatment to their different tempers, and dispositions ; may they only be like their mother—my excellent Mary, and then my most anxious wishes for them, will be satisfied.

A few days after this conversation, the venerable Mr. Sutherland quitted his much loved home, and only returned to it to be laid in the burial place of his ancestors.

Arthur Balfour was not suffered to remain much longer under the guardianship of his cousins, being claimed by his aristocratic relations; who, however, considered they had performed their duty by placing him at Eton, and at an early age giving him a commission in a *crack* regiment, which was soon after ordered on foreign service. This was fortunate for the young man; qualified as he was in every way to shine in society—he might—had he remained in the circle of fashion, and idleness, have been led into a vortex of dissipation, calculated to alter the bias of a character, which nature had formed in a most noble mould. Much indeed does the happiness and dignity of a young man's future destiny depend on the society he forms, and consequently the impression he imbibes on his first entrance into the world!

It was not till seven years had elapsed, that with a name standing high in his profession,

for honour and high principles, his innate vigour of mind strengthened, and his taste enriched by travel, that Arthur Balfour returned to his native country.

But it was his handsome person which perhaps gained for him most favour and approbation, in the fashionable circles to which he was again admitted; he was patronised and courted by the great—the rich—the beautiful! His mind however had acquired too healthy—too fastidious a tone, to be long satisfied with such frivolous companionship, and he turned from the gay—trifling—glittering worldlings, to the calm, intellectual Mark Sutherland, who happened to be in London at this time; and it was with real delight that he received from him a cordial invitation, to exchange the glare and confusion of his present mode of life, for the peace and serenity of the country. Mr. Sutherland, on his part, as he daily became better acquainted with the merits of his young cousin, remembered the wishes of his grand-

father with regard to Arthur, and his daughter Maud, and it was with pleasure he recollected them. Balfour was worthy of his child — his choice, he was sure, would never be influenced by mere beauty alone, or any worldly considerations. . “ And my daughter” he thought — and it was with the pride of a father — “ shall be wooed for herself and not for her fortune.” He forbore to dwell on the merits or attractions of his children, for with such a wish lurking in his heart, he felt that it was a delicate subject ; but though he always answered Arthur’s eager enquiries concerning his cousins, with the smiling promise, that he would soon have an opportunity of judging for himself, of their various qualifications and merits ; the young soldier read more from the glistening eye, of intense tenderness when he mentioned the name of his wife, and the fond look of pride and confidence with which he spoke of his daughters, than if he had passed hours in descanting on their perfections.

It was at length arranged that as Mr. Sutherland would be for some time longer detained in town, the young man should precede him to the Manor, and arrive there the day on which he had been expected. He however insisted on not informing his family of this change of plans, and charging Arthur with a note of explanation to Mrs. Sutherland, bade him adieu for a season, and Balfour, with extreme delight, found himself rapidly whirling far away from the crowded ball-rooms, and dusty streets of London, in which he had passed the last four months, during the height of what is called *the Season* !

CHAPTER II.

“ O tell me where
Could majesty and power
Be clothed—in forms so beautiful and fair ?”

“ It cannot be that years have passed
Since last I saw the place ;
For years bring change, and here is not
Of any change a trace.”

ANON.

It was on the lovely evening before described, that the young soldier approached one of those fair country homes for which our island stands pre-eminent.

They strike with astonished admiration

travellers who have been absent in foreign lands, and Sutherland Manor, situated in one of the most beautiful parts of Cumberland, where lake, wood, and mountain, all combine their charms, was perhaps more calculated to call forth those feelings than any other domain in England.

Arthur Balfour had not been transported from London in a few hurried hours, by the aid of steam and noise, but by the less rapid agency of post horses. Thus had he been enabled to feast his eyes at pleasure, on the beautiful scenery through which he passed, during his route from the South.

When the carriage rolled swiftly through the noble avenue, and then stopped at the well remembered porch of his "boyhood's home," so familiar did every object appear to him, that even if the same children had sprung out to greet him, at that moment, he would not have been very much startled.

The servants however, headed by a venera-

ble housekeeper, threw open wide the oaken door to receive their expected master, and on perceiving their mistake, civilly ushered him into the spacious hall, from the lofty walls of which, hung many a portrait of the gallant knights and haughty dames of his ancient race.

There is a feeling of nervous embarrassment experienced by many on a first arrival after a long absence, particularly when alone, and unknown—the task of introduction devolving on oneself — Balfour was therefore not sorry, remembering that eleven years had elapsed since he had been seen by his family, to be able to announce himself to Mrs. Power, and to request her to deliver to her mistress, the note he had brought from Mr. Sutherland, explaining the reason of his unlooked-for appearance. The old lady on recognising at last, in the tall, manly form before her, the pretty boy she had formerly so dearly loved, for his own and for his father's sake—soon changed from her civil pomposity to the most de-

lighted surprise and admiration. It was some time before the good old woman had sufficiently poured forth her expressions of astonishment and ecstacy, to admit of her informing him, that the ladies were out, but that they would shortly return ; and having ushered him through the long oaken vestibule into the spacious drawing-rooms, after lingering for a little more chat, she left him in order, as she said, to give directions for the preparation of his sleeping apartment. Arthur walked to the open window, and gazed upon the beautiful scene before him—a scene which had been gradually fading from his memory, assuming the form of an agreeable, though indistinct dream, but which now seemed as familiar as if he had never left it. He stepped out upon the broad, stone terrace, to enjoy the cool evening breeze, laden with the scent of the beautiful flowers, which grew in such cultivated luxuriance around.

The house stood on an eminence, commanding a splendid and extensive view of park and

wood, bordered in the distance by majestic purple mountains, furrowed with glens and rapid torrents. From the terrace sloped a spacious, verdant lawn, at the base of which might be seen, the pure, tranquil lake, glittering through the numerous woody and rocky knolls, of various elevations and sizes, which adorned its margin.

He well remembered, how once he had disdained the winding path, down which he was now tempted to wander; preferring rather to run from the top to the bottom of the slope, at the imminent peril of being precipitated into the blue lake below.

He stood for some time by the water's edge, with feelings of rapture and admiration swelling in his heart, as he gazed on this spectacle of nature's loveliness. His attention was soon diverted by the movements of two snow-white swans at a little distance from the spot; they were fluttering their wings and stretching their graceful necks, evidently in the act of receiving

from the hand of some one on the bank, their evening meal ; for fragments of bread were floating on the surface of the lake. The foliage of a spreading tree, concealed the person from Arthur's sight ; he approached gently, and perceived the figure of a young girl, seated on a rustic bench, beneath the shady branches of the tree, and, apparently, watching the movements of the stately birds.

On hearing the sound of a footstep, she turned a sweet face towards him ; a bright blush, at the unexpected sight of a stranger, spreading over her delicate features. She rose, and slightly bowing, stood as if awaiting an explanation. Balfour knew at once that she was a Sutherland, but which of the sisters, he could not feel sure ; though certainly, those mild, hazel eyes, and that gentle expression, reminded him more of his little friend May, than of the restless, bright-eyed Maud ; who, he ever remembered equally as his torment and delight.

He did not however pause to consider, but approaching her said :

“I do not presume to hope, Miss Sutherland, that you can recollect me, though perhaps you may still have some slight remembrance of Arthur Balfour, as he was in those joyful days, when his home was this beautiful spot, and he, the happiest of the happy. I can however, almost venture to say that this is not Maud Sutherland to whom I am now speaking, but her sister.”

“Arthur Balfour !” exclaimed May in delighted surprise, and she extended with the utmost cordiality, both her hands. “You are quite right,” she continued, smiling sweetly, “I am May—I also remember you—at least, I fancy I do. I never could have entirely forgotten you, hearing as I do your name so constantly mentioned by all who knew you here.”

“Mamma and Maud,” she continued, “are now on the lake—we are expecting my father, and as he sometimes stops at a little village on

the other side and is rowed over, they went there in the hope of meeting him."

Arthur was obliged to disclose the postponement of Mr. Sutherland's return, and to witness the disappointment depicted on the countenance of his fair cousin. It was vexatious to be the bearer of such unwelcome tidings, to those to whom he was so anxious to render himself acceptable.

May feared she had allowed her disappointment to be too apparent, so she kindly told him of the sincere pleasure she was certain her mother would feel in again seeing one, of whom she always spoke with such affection.

"And my father," she added, "has made us quite jealous lately — his letters are filled with your praises!"

The conversation then turned on their youthful reminiscences, and when Arthur broke forth into enthusiastic, but sincere and heartfelt praises of her father, the eyes of the daughter, so gentle and quiet in their usual expression,

beamed with bright animation, lighting up her features with such a glow of unmingled pleasure, that Arthur thought he had never seen so sweet a face.

The moments fled swiftly—the fair May seeming to have forgotten her late disappointment, and Balfour becoming so perfectly satisfied with the enjoyment of the peace inspiring influence of the tranquil evening, and the society of his gentle companion, whose quiet cheerfulness, so well accorded with the scene before him, that he began to feel no wish for any interruption.

“ All around was still and calm, the noon of night
Was fast approaching, up the unclouded sky
The glorious moon pursued her path of light,
And shed her silvery splendour far and nigh,
No sound save that of the night wind's gentle sigh,
Could reach the ear, and that so softly blew,
It scarcely stirred, in sweeping lightly by
The acacia's airy foliage—————”

It was indeed reviving, after many months passed in London, in society little interesting

to the feelings of the young man ; to gaze on this scene of tranquil beauty, and to listen to the soft voice of the graceful girl by his side. Arthur Balfour felt inexpressibly happy.

Their quiet *tête-à-tête* was soon interrupted, for the splashing of a light oar was heard and

“ Sweetly o’er the Lake”

resounded the notes of a guitar, accompanied by one of the most beautiful voices ever heard. Very few are insensible to the charms of music, and on the water the effect of melody is ever heightened—at this moment, the scenery—the twilight hour—the enchantment of the strain—all combined to excite the imagination of the young man. He could indeed have well believed that he had been transported into a land of enchantment.

“ Oh ! there they are !” cried May ; and after a few minutes’ pause, a tiny skiff, which had till now been hid by an islet, richly studded with birch, alders, and weeping willows, ap-

peared in sight, swiftly sped by a single rower. It was not yet sufficiently near to enable those on the bank to distinguish the countenances of the individuals in the boat, but it could be plainly seen that they were gazing earnestly towards the spot where May and Arthur stood. A voice as sweet, though less powerful, mingled with the clear, young, warbling notes, which had at first entranced the ear of Balfour. Nearer and nearer they approached, and it was evident, as May observed, that they mistook him for her father; for it was his favorite song, which welcomed him to his home, and while one of the ladies joyfully waved her handkerchief, the other as the boat drew near, throwing down her guitar, and seizing an oar, herself guided the boat. As thus she stood, her head thrown back, her form erect, her dark, long, auburn ringlets waved slightly by the evening breeze — her rosy lips parted, which seemed to speak the word “Father,” she looked indeed “The Lady of

the Lake," Scott's own beautiful "Ellen Douglas."

Arthur Balfour almost held his breath, dreading lest this beautiful vision should vanish. And indeed a change soon came over it, for at length becoming aware of her mistake, the look of joy with which Balfour had at first been regarded, changed to that of surprised scrutiny, and the fair steerer, though she did not

"Push her light shallop from the shore."

still at the sight of a stranger, her efforts to forward it entirely ceased.

She rested on her oar, and fixed on Arthur her large, bright eyes, with a keen glance of disappointment; and when she beheld how earnestly the stranger looked upon her, there was mingled with the deepening colour of her cheek, a compression of the curling upper lip, an almost imperceptible toss of the head, which impressed upon the gazer's mind, the

idea, that joined to a due sense of womanly modesty, there reigned in the breast of that lovely form, no small share of conscious beauty, with perhaps less of vanity, than proud indifference. The boat had now touched the bank, and May bending forward, said in a low tone.—

“ Dear Mamma ! my father does not return for some time, but he has sent you a note by Mr. Arthur Balfour ! ”

“ Arthur Balfour ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Sutherland, a smile of pleasure lighting up a face, which though it had lost the bloom of youth, was still very lovely. It was the same face which had beamed with kindness on Arthur, in his boyhood, and in the intervening years, it had never faded from his recollection ; he had seen it in his dreams, and there it was again—as sweet—as almost heavenly—as he had ever pictured it.

She gave him her hand to assist her from the boat, received him with affectionate warmth of feeling, and looked at the young

man with earnestness, as if seeking to trace in his handsome face, a resemblance to the little Arthur she had so dearly loved. Mr. Sutherland then turned to her daughters.

“ May has already renewed her acquaintance with you I perceive,” she said, “ but, Maud, you must also welcome your cousin.”

Maud, who had been regarding that cousin, with a look more of curiosity, than cordiality, coldly extended her hand, and cast down her beautiful eyes, as she listened to his words of greeting; and then she seemed to think she had conferred sufficient honour, for she hastily turned to her mother, who was reading her husband's letter, and questioned her in the tone of a spoilt child when disappointed of a promised pleasure, as to the reason of her father's non-arrival. There was something in that letter which had caused Mrs. Sutherland to raise her eyes, and for a moment fix them with a thoughtful glance on Arthur, and her eldest daughter as they stood side by side; but

she answered her enquiries, and then taking Arthur Balfour's arm.

"I am neither so nimble or so strong," she said, as they began to ascend the hill, "as when you used to challenge me to a race, Arthur, up and down the slope. Whilst I have been gradually failing in health and agility, you have been progressing in bodily power, you must now render aid, instead of requiring it from me; and in future be content with Maud and May as competitors, though you formerly disdained the speed of their little legs; but tell me what do you think of your playmates of days gone by?"

Arthur pressing the hand that hung upon his arm, and was sincere in the warmth with which he eulogized his cousin May, "she was," he said "lovely as in childhood, still possessing that winning gentleness which had ever distinguished her in infancy." Mrs. Sutherland listened to this eulogium with a gratified smile, but when he paused, she looked with eagerness

towards her other child, as if wishing—but at the same time—hesitating to ask his opinion of her.

The eyes of Balfour followed the direction of Mrs. Sutherland's glance, and were soon fixed on the sisters who were walking together at some little distance—their fair arms encircling each other's waists—

“ A lily of the valley—
A rose in all its pride !”

and Arthur turned to Mrs. Sutherland and exclaimed, “ Maud is beautiful—very beautiful ! But,” he added inwardly, “ give me the gentle lily, rather than this proud rose with all its beauty !”

CHAPTER III.

“T’was not the air—t’was not the words,
But the deep magic in the chords,
And in the lips, that gave such power
As music knew not till that hour.”

LALLAH ROOKE.

How versatile is man! Notwithstanding the inward thought expressed by Arthur Balfour in favour of the gentle May, when he again joined the party at the tea-table, his eyes wandered more to the “proud rose” than to the

“gentle lily ;” but the cordial smile and kind *empressement*, with which Maud made room for him by her side, produced as different an effect, both on her beauty and on Arthur’s feelings respecting it, as sunshine contrasted with gloomy weather, on a beautiful landscape. Oh ! how repugnant to all men, is an ungracious, repellent manner in a woman, and how irresistible and universal a charm—far surpassing beauty—is that animated suavity of address, which (as some old author observes and young ladies ought to learn by heart) “adds elegance to the loveliest form, and causeth beauty, like the rose it resembleth, to retain its sweetness, even when its bloom is withered.” The truth is, that during their walk homewards, May had been repeating to her sister, all the admiration and affection which Arthur Balfour had expressed in speaking of their father ; she knew that it would gratify Maud, and May was right, for although she merely said, “And who would not praise our father—is he not the most per-

fect of men ?—a person must be blind, or contemptible indeed, who did not appreciate his superior merits !”—still the effect was favourable to Arthur Balfour. Mrs. Power was in the drawing-room when he entered, on the plea of superintending the preparations for tea, but in reality for the purpose of hearing what her mistress had to say on the subject of the new arrival, and of delivering her own comments on the topic in question.

“ Mrs. Power has been entertaining us with anecdotes of ‘ the merry days when we were young’ Mr. Balfour, or Arthur I suppose I may call you—though we are but third cousins,” said Maud, as the housekeeper, having exhausted her admiration and employment, left the room.—“ By her account, it appears I behaved very ill to you ; I think I do remember,” she exclaimed, laughing and raising her dark eyes as if endeavouring to bring back the past, more vividly before her, “ yes now I quite remember, being rather jealous of your

attentions to May, who would insist upon sitting upon your knee for hours together, stroking your face, or playing with your curls, whilst you told her stories—Yes, May, you need not blush, it is true indeed. I do not think,” she added, again turning to Balfour, “that I attacked you personally; perhaps because your sense of gallantry was too great, to permit you to resent it; so I tyrannised over my rival, and then you were angry enough—May found you a brave champion.”

“And so I trust she will ever find me in her cause,” answered Arthur, smiling, “but I only hope it may be against some other enemy, for though I have grown older and braver, I doubt much whether my courage would be now sufficient, to resist such a foe,—and such fire!”

And he shaded his eyes with much terror from the brilliant orbs, which were laughingly fixed upon him.

The conversation was carried on in this

strain for some time, till at length Mrs. Sutherland begged for her usual evening amusement of music, and Balfour again heard that beautiful voice, which had before delighted his ear. No expense had been spared in its cultivation, but in this instance nature still triumphed over art, for its rich melody could scarcely be improved. May also sang sweetly, and her voice blended well with that of her sister, but it did not possess the same power and compass.

Mrs. Sutherland, who fatigued by the exercise she had taken, was reclining on the sofa enjoying the music, and watching with pleasure Arthur's admiration of her favorite child, suddenly exclaimed,

"Do you retain the musical talent you possessed as a boy? I had made you quite a good singer when you left me."

"I have never lost the taste for it, acquired by your instruction," Balfour replied, "Ours is a musical regiment. The band under our au-

spices is one of the finest in the service—I only wish you could hear it !”

“ But as that is not quite possible at present,” interrupted Maud, “ I think it would be as well if you would give us a specimen of your own performance. Mamma enquired whether you could sing, and as I plainly perceive that you *can*, I beg you will begin, without giving us the trouble of pressing you any further. It is very fortunate,” she continued, “ that you do like music, for here we almost exist upon it.”

Arthur however assured her, that his talent had hitherto been confined to taking parts in glees, trios, &c. with his brother officers, and insisted with some firmness on being excused for that night at least.

Mrs. Sutherland and May at length united in his cause—seeing his evident reluctance—pleading as an apology the fatigue of his long journey.—

"We will not let him off so easily another time," added May.

Maud opened her large eyes, and fixed them upon him with anger and astonishment, at having found one so bold as for a moment to resist her will, and she was silently rising from the instrument, as if disdaining to use further entreaties, when May whispered in the ear of the offender.

"Do sing to please Maud."

Whether his obstinacy were quelled by the gentle expression which accompanied this last petition, or by the fiery glance previously darted upon him by the imperious beauty, we know not, but Arthur turning towards the piano-forte, looked over a heap of music which lay near it, and suddenly stopped when he came to the glee, "Blow gentle gales."

May who had followed him, on perceiving this, joyfully exclaimed :

"Oh, I see by the expression of your countenance that you sing this ! Maud pray do

come—Arthur can sing ‘ Blow gentle gales’—we always so much wished to find a third voice—Papa will be delighted—it is his favorite trio.”

Maud who had walked to the window, and was at that moment seemingly intent on watching the lovely moon as it sailed in majestic beauty from beneath the dark clouds, and cast its mild radiance on the clear lake, quite forgot her offended dignity on hearing this explanation ; and was in another instant at the instrument, joining in that sweet glee, which so well suited their respective voices—and Maud vouchsafed to smile again on Arthur Balfour.

He went to rest with that smile before his eyes—and sweet sounds ringing in his ears, which, notwithstanding the fatigues of the day, for a considerable time banished sleep from his eyelids.

CHAPTER IV.

“ True happiness is not a plant of earth,
The search is fruitless, if you seek it here---
'Tis an exotic of celestial birth,
And never blooms but in celestial air.
It rises oft and buds, but ne'er was seen
To blossom quite---the climate is too cold. ’

IF Sutherland Manor looked beautiful in the subdued light of eve, how much more lovely did it appear, lighted up by the bright radiance of morning sunshine—and if Arthur Balfour on his first arrival, was delighted with its in-

mates—how greatly did the charm increase—as, day by day, he gazed on their beauty, and discovered how superior was their excellence of mind. It was to him a second paradise, where happiness alone could intrude—and when, during the following week, Mr. Sutherland returned home—it was indeed the perfection of domestic bliss.

Whilst journeying through this vale of tears, now and then a picture may present itself, of seemingly unbounded prosperity, one over which the sky appears so serene and cloudless, that a dark spot can never be discerned to dim its pure azure—where the sun of happiness is for ever shining!—but alas!—those, whom grief has made wise, look with trembling on the brightness — “Can all this last? Man is born to trouble,” they exclaim, “and is it possible that any of the race of Adam shall be exempted from the usual sorrows of mortality?” Perhaps, with the experience of misfortune, they can perceive high above the heads of

these favoured mortals, that same small, dark spot, "not bigger than a man's hand"—almost imperceptible from the surrounding brightness. But that it must increase—and spread—and in time, cover with its sackcloth hue, the hitherto unclouded firmament, is a matter of awful certainty—and when at last the storm bursts—woe be to them who have built their hopes on the quicksand of this world's perishable bliss.

"Whatever passes as a cloud between
The mental eye of faith, and things unseen,
Causing that bright world to disappear,
Or seem less lovely, or its hopes less dear,
THIS is our world---our idol---though it bear
Affection's impress, or devotion's air."

And such was the danger that awaited the Sutherlands. From the day of their marriage, until the present hour—perfect felicity had been the lot of Mark Sutherland and his wife. People are generally supposed to have some skeleton in their closet—some *bête noir* to create an alloy, in the best regulated and happiest

families—but no such monster seemed to haunt the house of the Sutherlands. Every wish was gratified—Some might perchance think that one more blessing might still be desired—a son to inherit his father's fortune and name—but the father himself thought not of it. In the full tide of his prosperity, it was not on wordly possessions that his heart was placed; he valued them only as they contributed to the happiness of his greatest treasure—his wife! And his love was returned with as deep—as fervent an intensity, mixed with a still purer, holier flame—“speaking less of earth than Heaven,” which created a beneficial influence on the husband. But even from Paradise—with all its beauty and innocence—sin could not be excluded; and so in the loveliest mind, some dark shade will ever mingle itself, teaching a sad lesson of the innate earthliness of human nature. In the heart of Mrs. Sutherland this shade of imperfection,

arose from the most tender of human feelings,

“A mother’s love——.”

but its excess became a sin! — poisoned the healthful tide—and drew into the snare her husband—but *all* she did was right in his eyes.

By the injunctions of old Mr. Sutherland not to spoil young Maud—it was evident, even at that early age, she was at least showing signs of a disposition, which required strict attention and management—but was the old man’s advice regarded and remembered?

Daily increasing in loveliness, and fascination, the child entwined herself more closely round the mother’s heart, and it became at last that parent’s sole thought, to shield from every infantine grief—her heart’s darling. And how did the little girl bear this overweening fondness?

She soon began to know no will but her own — no sorrow but when that will was crossed—and that was indeed very seldom—for

as in the nursery she won every heart by her childish grace—her merry ringing laugh, which gladdened all around her, and made them bow down willingly to her self-willed pride, when it was excited, so was it also in the school-room. Her governess, not understanding her disposition, at first attempted to restrain, with authority the spirit of defiance and wilfulness, which she discovered in her pupil, but the gentle nature of the preceptress quailed at the fierce resistance of the child, and the fiery glance shot from the dark eyes, which in anger rested upon her. She tried submission on her part and the experiment succeeded. The little girl yielded of her own accord—gentleness on the part of Miss Meyer effected what severe authority never could have accomplished, and she afterwards astonished her governess by her talent, good sense and amiability, *when not opposed!*

The young Maud had strong feelings, and those she loved, she adored passionately; but

her affections had been confined to her father, mother and sister; as they never contradicted her it was difficult to discriminate whether her love for them, or her self-will, would gain the victory, if set in opposition one with the other. Had a little judicious fear been mingled with the love she bore her parents, her proud spirit might have been kept in stricter bonds, for it did once happen that she deeply wounded her mother's heart—that heart which would willingly have bled to save her from the slightest pang, and then she in her turn trembled, and quailed, before her father's stern gaze, and the angry words that fell from his lips, which had never before breathed ought but tender endearments towards her. She fell on his neck, and in an agony of grief as violent in its nature as her former pride and passion, implored him not to look upon her with such offended eyes, or she must surely die. He pressed her to his heart and said, whilst a tear glistened in his eye,

“ Never again grieve your mother, Maud, that I never *can* forgive.”

And it was long—very long ere she again did so. Childhood passed, and sense increasing with her years, curbed in some degree the unruly passions, which had formerly swayed her impulses. The year before this story commences, she had on attaining her seventeenth year been presented at Court, and mixed for a while in the gaities of a London Season. Her parents for her sake, left the comparative seclusion in which they had for some time dwelt--- a seclusion at least from the London world! Mrs. Sutherland's health was delicate, and their children were so young, that except for the benefit of masters, they had rarely left their country home. But now they thought it right that Maud should see something of the world, in which, both on account of her brilliant prospects, and personal attractions, she was probably destined to play a conspicuous part.

For awhile the fair *debutante* seemed dazzled by the *éclat* which attended her appearance, and her anxious parents began to fear that the pure and innocent enjoyments, which had hitherto gilded her young life, would never again be so fully appreciated ; but in this instance they judged erroneously.

One day Maud appeared before them, and to their great surprise, entreated her parents, in a manner which showed plainly, that she intended to brook no refusal, to take her back to her “ dear beautiful Sutherland,” for she was sick to death of London and its society.

They hesitated, but as usual she soon gained her point, and was as happy to escape from the noble and fashionable crowd of admirers, who were in the train of the beautiful heiress, as May, to leave the masters and confined school-room, where she --- not having yet “ come out,” past most of her London season, and while some anxious and disappointed

eyes, were gazing with astonishment and dismay, at the list of names in the "departures" of the "Morning Post," and others searching amidst the beauteous maze of ball room---opera---or *fête*, for the Star which had shone for a little moment with such brightness. Maud was flying back to her home, as joyous, as callous of the sensation she had created, as a pet bird which escapes from its cage, and flies to the woods and groves, far away from those who have long fled and cherished it.

Shortly after this period the increased decline of Mrs. Sutherland's health, caused all hearts to cling more tenderly around her--- It seemed as if at last, on the clear firmament above them, a small, dark cloud was becoming visible, but so gradually did it spread, that they could scarcely as yet perceive it. It was dim to all, save her on whom it more immediately lowered. She knew---though distant the time might be---that it must eventually

separate her from those she loved so well, and while the idea made her cling more fondly round her beloved ones—it made her also strive to pierce that dark cloud, to behold the glory beyond, and there to raise her hopes—praying that those belonging to her might rise there also—far above this world of sight and sense.

But though the bloom on her cheek, was giving place to a more delicate—a more hectic tinge, she only seemed in the eyes of her husband and children more lovely than ever, and though her once light-bounding step could no longer climb the steep hill, or mountain, or bear the fatigue of a gallop on the favorite horse—her husband was so happy to find her leaning on his arm as she walked; and her children to lead her pony up the ascents, or drive her in their quiet, little equipage; and do all in their power to raise up that sweet, pleased and gratified smile, which had now taken place of

cheerful laugh, which used to gladden all around her — that they sometimes forgot, the cause which called for these anxious attentions—her altered and declining health.

She was still as calmly cheerful—as uncomplaining unmindful of self, as she had ever been. The medical men too—the most skilful of whom had been consulted in London—raised no alarm in the minds of her family—they only recommended great care and quiet, and these she never lacked. Even Maud forgot self, in striving to administer to her mother's comfort—the mother who had done so much for her—And May, we must say one word of her.

She had fulfilled the prophecy of her father, whilst she was yet a child, that “her will would be ever that of those she loved.”—And she was fondly beloved—equally valued as her sister, but in a different way—she ruled that love, with a humbler — gentler, a more

grateful sway. She was less lovely than Maud—her beauty like that of her namesake month, was fresh — smiling, but more subdued—less dazzling than that of her summer sister.

She won all hearts by her sweet temper—her considerate thoughtfulness towards others, her simplicity and *naïveté*.

“ In truth she was a light and lovely thing,
Fair as the opening flower of early spring.”

CHAPTER V.

“ This should have been a noble creature ; he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled ; as it is,
It is an awful chaos—light and darkness
And mind and dust—and passions and pure thoughts
Mix'd, and contending without end or order,
All dormant or destructive.”

BYRON.

“ WE have been so happy and merry together,”
said Mr. Sutherland one morning, about a
month after his return home, when the party
were all seated round the breakfast table, read-
ing and commenting on the contents of their

various letters and newspapers, "we have been so contented with ourselves that we have forgotten the duties of hospitality, and have not invited any one into the house for ages—We must have some one, Arthur to help us to shoot the partridges. I have however been quieting my conscience, by thinking how well this calm life suits that lady," and Mr. Sutherland looked towards his wife.

"Oh yes, Mark!" she answered imploringly, "do let us remain at present as we are; the partridges I am sure will not complain that they are neglected; for you seem to give all the country leave to shoot them, if I may judge from the continual fire of shots kept up all day—nor can our neighbours either."

"And what have you to say about it, Maud?" continued Mr. Sutherland, "ought we not to give your cousin a little country gaiety, in return for having left London for the sake of our society."

"I know not what my cousin may think on

the subject," was her reply, "but for my part I had enough of both town and country gaiety last year—I had no sooner escaped from the former, hoping for a little peace and quiet, when some of the same faces and same speeches I had seen and heard in London followed me here."

"Did they all come to shoot partridges?" asked Arthur slyly, for he had heard of her numerous conquests.

She blushed, and replied rather haughtily,

"They might have come to *try* to ensnare other game, but if such were their intention they went away without having succeeded in the attempt."

"To give you a proof of how little tired I am of my present life," said Arthur, "I will, if you will permit me, take the liberty of refusing these invitations I have just received; and remain,"—he added more seriously, while he gave a timid glance at one of the party, "where I have passed five weeks of such

perfect happiness that they have seemed but one."

All but the individual to whom that glance was directed, expressed their warm approval of this proposal, and she concealed her face with the newspaper which had been hastily taken up, and seemed buried in its contents, so that no one saw the bright glow, which lighted up her face, or the sparkling of her eyes—kindled—either by the words she had heard, or something in the paragraph she seemed so attentively perusing.

"I have not however yet told you," said Mr. Sutherland, "of the addition I expect to our party. He is a self-invited guest, and although you all appear to have become such misanthropes, I think none of the ladies will object, when I name him as the fascinating, irresistible Harry Percy."

"Is he indeed coming here?" exclaimed Mrs. Sutherland, in a tone of interest mingled with a shade of painful anxiety.

Maud removed the paper from before her face, and even May suddenly stopped in the very act of pouring out her mother's coffee, to listen to this announcement, which indeed seemed to have created so great a sensation, that Arthur's curiosity was excited.

"Who is this redoubtable Harry Percy?" he exclaimed.

"Never proclaim your ignorance, by asking such a question," replied Mr. Sutherland laughing. "Why, Balfour, not to know Harry Percy, proclaims at once yourself unknown—at least in the sporting world."

"And in that world I cannot say I have as yet been much initiated," said Arthur; "the Balfours are not a sporting family, and I do not ever recollect meeting him any where—though now I think of it, I have some remembrance of having heard his name mentioned, and of having once at the Opera seen him, when he was pointed out to me, by a fair relative—I knew not however that he was so

noted a character, or so intimate a friend of yours; it would have then made a stronger impression upon me."

"Not only a friend," replied Mrs. Sutherland, "but a relative—he is my nephew—the son of my sister who was very dear to me, and for her sake, I love him—although circumstances, and different tastes and pursuits have much separated us."

"I do not know what country air may do for him," exclaimed Maud, "but I am sure when I saw him in London, I did not perceive anything so very fascinating in his appearance, at least—First of all he is quite old, more than thirty, and—"

"Have mercy, Maud, upon what you call elderly gentlemen, past thirty!" interposed her father laughing.

"However," continued the young beauty, "I remember when May and I were children we considered him all perfection, for many a

holiday and amusement he begged for us, allowing us to tease him, and romp with him, as much as we pleased—and he used to kiss us so often and tell us we were beautiful—which, to tell you the truth, always won my heart, though May was indifferent to such praise.”

All the party laughed heartily at this frank avowal, and she continued.—

“And then a few years after, when the house was full of visitors, and mamma occupied in entertaining them—we poor wretches were consequently kept still closer prisoners to the school-room, and how delighted we felt on a long, wet afternoon, to see his merry face peep in, and to hear him ask leave to enter—and so was Miss Meyer I am sure—though she always, at first, endeavoured to look demure, but her gravity soon disappeared, and it ended in her laughing nearly as much as we did, at his droll stories—and do you remember, May, how she used to blush at his high flown compliments—

not on her beauty — he had the tact to know what flattery would suit her best — her attainments were his theme of praise — or what she prized still more—those of her pupils.”

“ Yes!” said May, “ but she used however to look grave, if she saw by your tell tale blushes, Maud, that he was pouring compliments in our ears, and then she would say that we were too old to be told that we were pretty—or clever.”

“ But I am sure I liked him all the better for it,” laughed Maud; “ for I believe I was rather fond of admiration *then*,” she added colouring slightly, for she saw the eyes of Arthur fixed upon her, with an enquiring look, which seem to say,

“ And are you fond of it now?”

“ No one understands better than Percy how to suit his compliments, to those on whom he bestows them,” remarked Mr. Sutherland.

It is partly on that account I believe that he is such a favorite with the ladies."

"But I am sure," again persisted Maud, "at the few places at which I met him last year, or when he called at our house, which was not often, I never saw any one look so ill; such a long, sallow face, nothing left of beauty, but his magnificent eyes, which, from a baby, I always remarked; and then when he did try to make himself agreeable at a ball—it seemed all effort, or false excitement---and in a morning visit he was always so busy talking to you papa, that—"

"That he had not time to win his fair cousin's approbation, by the fine speeches which once gained her heart—speeches she was hearing from so many others at that time."

"No papa, I meant not that," she answered, erecting her graceful head, "he would soon, like those others, have found how little value I set upon them now."

"It is not so much in London," said Mr.

Sutherland, "that he shoots his arrows at ladies' hearts—he keeps that sport for country amusement—sport which he seems to class with the destruction of pheasants and hares, wounding them as carelessly, and without receiving injury himself. A skilful marksman is Harry Percy, and rarely—very rarely he misses his aim. In London his thoughts, as well as his heart, are engaged with other game; less detrimental are then his pursuits to the fair sex—far more ruinous to himself, poor fellow! No wonder his cheeks are hollow and his spirits forced—much has he to answer for—riches and health despised and wasted—time and talents misapplied! When you last saw him, Maud, he was enduring the misery and annoyance, resulting from a gambler's ruined fortune!"

"Poor Harry!" sighed Mrs. Sutherland, "it is indeed sad to reflect on his career of error and folly."

"His affairs, which I trust I have in some measure arranged—at least for the present,"

continued Mr. Sutherland, "make it necessary that for a short time, he should retire from the world — he therefore begs me to lend him 'Percy Castle,' as he calls a cottage he used formerly to occupy, for he says his health and spirits are in a sad state, and quiet and solitude, enlivened by the society of his aunt and cousins, will best tend to revive both his mind and body."

"Ah," said Mrs. Sutherland in a gentle, pitying tone, "I fear his satiated feelings will be unable to relish the simple, unexcitable refreshment, we can afford him."

"I do not agree with you there," replied her husband; "we flatter ourselves, that our society is not quite so unpalatable as you would infer, my dear Mary; and I assure you, Harry Percy, when speaking of his intended visit, professed to anticipate as much pleasure, from fishing parties on the lake—excursions up the mountains—songs from Maud and May—quiet chats with you, Mary, and lastly, shooting partridges with Arthur and myself,

as he ever did from an evening at Crockford's, or the Derby day and St. Leger."

Maud curled her lip, at the idea of her society and attractions being placed on a par, with such objects and pursuits, and Mr. Sutherland rising and walking to the window, proposed their all adjourning to the cottage.

"A quiet walk will do you good this fine morning, Mary. I must arrange about having the place put in order, to receive so refined a tenant, and the assistance and taste of ladies are always valuable in such cases."

The whole party were soon in motion, enjoying the fresh exhilarating air of a lovely September morning.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Who plays for more
Than he can lose, with pleasure stakes his heart.”

Game is a civil gunpowder in peace,
Blowing up houses with their whole increase.”

HERBERT.

THEIR way led over a common covered with fragrant heath, which joined the outskirts of the pleasure grounds of the Manor, a smooth, verdant path, which looked very tempting for a gallop, running through the midst of it—and

over this path they now proceeded, Arthur, with a fair cousin on either arm, his quick, firm, soldier-like tread, soon out-stripping the languid step of Mrs. Sutherland, who with her kind husband, suiting his pace to hers, followed at a distance.

She listened with delight to the merry voices of the trio, borne back to her by the breeze, and sounding to her ears more sweet than the musical notes of the birds which hovered near.

The father gazed after them with fond pride.

“How beautiful Maud is!” he said.

And this led to their conversing on a subject which, though it became day by day nearer their hearts, they rarely touched upon, even to each other, for they felt it to be one of peculiar delicacy. It was the wish expressed by their grandfather, and which was gradually becoming not only their own desire, but their most earnest hope. It was a hope and desire springing from

the purest motive, not from pride or any worldly consideration, or they would not have fixed their wishes upon the young soldier, as a husband for their idolized daughter, incapable as he was of augmenting her wealth, or raising her to a higher station ; for with all her advantages, both of fortune and beauty, they might have claimed for her an alliance amidst the noble and wealthy of the land.

But even setting aside all family reasons, Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland would have still chosen Arthur from among many, for the protector — the future guide of their high spirited—their self-willed Maud !

They well knew that on the choice of that guide, the happiness—the well-being of her life would depend. She would need a firm but gentle disposition to compete with hers, and strong, unvarying affection to satisfy her *exigante* heart. She would never brook indifference or neglect. It would either crush her

proud spirit, or turn her warm love into bitter hate. Weak servility she would despise — tyranny would rouse into fury all the fierce rebellious feelings within her.

The parents well knew the failings and peculiarities of their child, and whom had they seen, so calculated to soften the asperities of her character, and direct it into a proper course, as the manly, high-minded, mild and affectionate Arthur Balfour; but they would lend no assistance in forwarding their wishes---they even sought to conceal them from the parties concerned, till circumstances should fully justify their declaring them. They expected it to be a work of time, so they were not disheartened at perceiving as yet, in the deportment of the young people towards each other, merely the calm, frank attention of a brother, shewn by Arthur to Maud, and accepted by her, in the same merry, careless, matter-of-course manner, with which she generally received the devotion

of her family, and none of the proud scorn she bestowed on her London admirers.

They also saw that Arthur was less dazzled than others had been with the bright beauty of Maud---but time and her charms would be invincible they little doubted—although, perhaps, anxiety mingled with their hopes.

After a walk of about a quarter of a mile across the common, the party reached a thick wood, the favorite resort of scores of pheasants and hares—and there stood a rustic cottage, the “Percy Castle,” of which Mr. Sutherland had spoken. It had once been the residence of a maiden sister of his grandfather, but on her death, was occasionally lent as a shooting box to relations, or intimate friends, who preferred a private establishment to the hospitality of the Manor.

The now expected occupant had laughingly conferred the present exalted title upon it, having in former days made the cottage his abode ;

and here once more, under its low, thatched roof, in its quiet, simple rooms, with no sounds to break in upon his retirement, save the waving of the trees, or the chirping of the birds, he would have time to ruminate in silence, over fortune ruined—time lost—talents despised and misapplied—friends estranged—and all the ruin brought about through the agency of that selfish, unworthy propensity, which principle and moral courage were not strong enough to enable him to cast aside, and had therefore proved the bane of his existence—the destroyer of his happiness—the perverter of his *once* noble heart and virtuous resolutions—and this was the vice of gambling! Yes—Harry Percy began his career with the brightest prospects of worldly prosperity. Beloved and admired by all, both abroad, and at home—his animation, wit, talents -- his affectionate, warm manners—his handsome person, and a certain fascination of demeanour which was irresistible, won all

hearts--No wonder, with so many attractions, that even before he had obtained his majority—he made an easy entrance into the most select circles of fashionable life---was courted, fêted, flattered --- his presence hailed with delight wherever he went; and Harry Percy, pleased with himself, was pleased with all the world.

It had been well with him if he could have remained contented with this happiness, for he had indeed “the ball at his feet.” But his position was one of peril. He was an aim for more dangerous shafts than the bright eyes of the lovely beings whom he assembled in the winter, when he kept open house at his beautiful place in Cheshire.

In the fashionable world there is a set, which is composed indeed of many who are styled noble—honourable, but whose nobility and honour are like the beauty of the painted and garnished sepulchre, serving only as a cover for much that is false and dishonourable, proflig-

gate and dissolute; and of such as these did the gifted Harry Perey become the prey.

He had commenced life prematurely early, and satiated tastes led him easily to seek for fresh excitement, in the paths his associates pointed out to him. Whatever he undertook, he entered into with enthusiasm — With the natural energy of his disposition, he plunged into the gulph of gambling, and sank never to rise again—his open handed, careless liberality, making him a ready victim to the sharks who had thus allured him.

Warnings he had many, but they availed not — Fortune, which had from his birth so kindly smiled upon him, seemed now to desert him—however sink or swim in the unhallowed stream in which he had plunged—there he must remain. At the age of thirty his possessions were dissipated, his free, generous spirit enslaved.

His noble estate was sold to satisfy the numerous creditors who poured clamorously

upon him, and from whose importunities he must have made a shameful retreat from the country, had it not been for the liberal assistance of Mr. Sutherland.

And the heart of the gamester!—After years of such companionship---such pursuits, who could preserve his heart from the canker worm, which gradually works its way, devouring all that is fair and beautiful within?

But the fair exterior remained, and though by degrees he had disappeared in part from those circles of London gaiety, of which he had once been the ornament and delight — though mothers now as carefully guarded their daughters from the ruined spendthrift as they had formerly courted and encouraged the rich, eligible *parti*, Harry Percy, still he was the irresistible, fascinating—the more dangerous, if possible, to every heart he chose to vanquish, whenever did he enter into society.

CHAPTER VII.

“ As I pursued my journey
I spied a withered hag, with age grown double,
Picking dry sticks, and mumbling to herself ;
Her eyes with scalding rheum, were galled and red,
Cold palsy shook her head, her hand seemed withered.”

OTWAY.

WE must retrace our steps to the cottage, where Arthur and his fair companions had long since arrived.

Balfour was standing by the lattice window from which two young faces were peeping,

looking like roses amongst the green vine leaves which surrounded them.

At the rustic porch was one who curiously scrutinized their every action---listened to every word that fell from the lips of the merry group, to which she formed so striking a contrast; for she was old and very hideous, her decrepitude and infirmity approaching nearly to deformity; at first sight she seemed almost unearthly. To Maud and May however, she was an accustomed object, therefore the old crone remained unnoticed by them.

“Reach me that bunch of grapes Arthur,” exclaimed Maud, “they look very tempting, and will be most refreshing after our walk.”

Arthur with some difficulty contrived to gather the luxuriant cluster, which like all good things grew much higher, and were consequently more unattainable than the rest.

The old hag followed his movements with her small blear eyes, as if she grudged the grapes being given to Maud.

"Oh! Arthur, I see a bunch much more beautiful," again cried the capricious lady, stretching her graceful neck out of the window, "there look, just above the porch---I must have them instead of these."

"Do you mean those?" replied Arthur, pointing to a cluster, "I assure you they are not half so ripe as the others---Now May, I must find you some as fine, if I can."

"May shall have these, if she will condescend to receive rejected goods---I have quite set my heart upon that other bunch, and have it, I must and will, so quick; sir," added Maud, with mock command.

"Oh pray give them to me," replied May, "I shall not be so foolish, sister mine, as to throw away the best grapes, *because* they have been rejected; and I think," she continued, bursting into a merry laugh, at the dismayed look with which the coveted bunch (on nearer inspection proving hardly ripe) was received

by her sister, "I think the pretty lady who refused them, would now take them back in exchange for her 'beauties.'"

"Oh no," said Maud half provoked, but half laughing too, "these sour ones gave Arthur rather more trouble, which is a consolation—I never care about anything which is within every body's reach; but" continued she in a sly tone, fixing her eyes with a playful, covetous look on the fruit in May's hand, "I would not have been so mean spirited, little sister, as to have accepted what another had despised—and after all they are not so *very* fine."—

She suddenly stopped, for May's gay laugh was echoed by one far less musical, beginning by a suppressed chuckling, which increased to a screech like that of an enraged peacock, interrupted ever and anon by the words "sour grapes—sour grapes!" pronounced in a cackling, mumbling tone.

Maud put her hands to her ears, to shut out

the discordant sounds, and Arthur started and turned round, looking as much astonished as if he had heard the laugh of a hyena.

The hideous cause of this disturbance seemed glad to have attracted any sort of notice, and approaching nearer to the window, she said, addressing May, in a patronising tone—

“That’s right, Miss May, don’t you be over scornful; pride sooner or later will have its fall—it ever comes, as the parson tells us, before destruction, and mayhap one of these fine days you may chance to pick up something better than grapes which others have thrown away, for what *they* think finer—May it prove to her,” she added, turning a vindictive glance at Maud, “yes I say, may it prove to her as sour as the grapes—and then let her come and feast her great black eyes on your sweets—Miss May honey—and cry them out if she pleases, because she didn’t take them when she could.”

Having delivered this harangue, she gave a

satanic grin at Maud, and then entered the cottage, banging the door violently after her—Maud shrugged her shoulders with a disdainful smile and answered Arthur's question of—

“What can make that old woman so bitter against you, Maud?” by exclaiming—

“Oh! I offended her when I was a child, by some not very civil remarks about her looks, and she, like most very ugly people, being extremely tenacious on the subject, has never forgiven me—you cannot imagine the spite she has against me. She is too contemptible and a little mad besides, or I would not endure her insolence—you can have no idea of its extent at times.”

“And is Mr. Percy to have the pleasure of her company whilst he is here?” said Arthur, “I should think she would prove an antidote to peace of mind, and equanimity of temper!”

“Oh yes! she will not be induced to take her departure. She is the widow of an

old servant of our grandfather's, who made Papa promise to provide for her; he therefore allowed her to take charge of the cottage, while uninhabited, of course intending her to turn out whenever it should be occupied; but some years ago Harry Percy came down to take possession, and found her fighting with his fine valet, positively refusing to leave the premises, and Harry, who always acts from the impulse of the moment, very good-naturedly, but rashly, allowed her to remain. He, I remember, sometimes jokingly complained, afterwards, that he could not sleep, from fancying he saw her hideous face peeping at him through the curtains of his bed; and his valet appeared one day, and gravely assured him that the old witch turned the milk sour, and had poisoned his favorite dog because it bit her cat, and ended by declaring that, if he were expected to keep company with an "evil eye," he must desire that his wages might be increased."

Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland had by this time made their appearance, and they all adjourned in a body to find old Judith, in order to break to her the necessity of the cottage being thoroughly cleaned and put in a proper state, for the reception of the visiter who was to intrude upon her solitude.

They found her in a small back kitchen, cowering by the fire, over which was suspended a large cauldron, containing some sort of mess intended for her dinner, which she was watching and stirring up whilst it bubbled and hissed, with the same interest and anxiety as did the famed witches of Macbeth, their strange and charmed concoction. A huge black cat was seated on one side of the hearth, erecting its back and mewing occasionally, whilst it intently observed with its glaring eyes every movement of its mistress, evidently awaiting the completion of the preparation of the meal of which he was to partake.

Neither the cat nor his mistress looked much pleased at the interruption to their occupation, but, on Mr. Sutherland apologising in a suitable manner, Judith suppressed the dark scowl which had gathered on her withered features, and listened with tolerable graciousness to his commands ; even condescending to relax into a grim smile, or rather grin at some speech of her master in allusion to her former victory, over one of the visitors she was again to expect.

The black grimalkin also suffered the fair hand of May to pass itself over his wiry back, but whenever Maud approached, it reared that back on high, and furiously glared, and spit at her.

“ He, he, he !” chuckled his mistress, with mischievous satisfaction, as she perceived this, “ Tom’s a fine fellow, he can tell what’s sweet and what’s sour though others can’t—can’t he, Miss May hinny ?” and she winked sig-

nificantly at May, with one of her dreadful eyes.

The latter laughed ; she thought the old woman was again referring to the story of the grapes, but had she been more observant, May might have discovered, that this speech was partly levelled against Arthur, for her business with Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland having concluded, she had since been watching with much displeasure, the pleased and admiring attention, bestowed by the young soldier, on every gesture, every word, of the graceful object of her aversion, while her favourite May was obliged to remain satisfied with only the very flattering notice of the aforesaid black Tom.

There was nothing to be done towards the arrangement and embellishment of the cottage, till the necessary cleaning had taken place, so the merry party once more bent their steps towards the Manor.

Their conversation turned on the extraordinary character of old Judith — her aversion to Maud — and partiality to the gentle May, who was rallied on the apparent congeniality existing between the old lady, herself, and the cross black cat.

The secret however was simply this. Maud when a child—a spoilt beauty—with impulses always indulged, had been kindly offered by Judith, a cake from her yellow, skinny hand. The little girl, after regarding it and the donor for an instant, with a look of supreme disgust, cast it from her.

Her governess reproved her for her ungracious conduct, and the reply was,—

“ I could not eat anything from the hand of one so hideous—Oh, Miss Meyer, how happy I am that I was not born ugly !”

Judith heard this speech — hers was not a character to forgive an insult, because it happened to be offered by one who was young, rich,

and beautiful—these advantages rather tended to inflame her hatred, for she grudged her the possession of them. The antipathy of the vindictive old woman increased, rather than diminished by time. Maud was not likely to endeavour to conciliate one, from whom she received naught but taunts, and bitter words—she, the idolised both of the rich and poor !

May on the contrary was ever on the watch, lest any look, any word should escape from her, which savoured of a consciousness of superiority in any respect, and thus by civility “which costs nothing and buys everything,” even golden opinions---had excited in the strange being Judith, as much love, as Maud had kindled hatred in her distorted heart—and though to the highly favoured heiress, the praise, or censure of a wretched half-crazed creature like old Judith was of little moment, yet the veriest worm will turn, when trampled on—as the fable goes—the lion, the king of the

forest, owed his life to the good offices of an insignificant little mouse. And as the quaint poet Herbert says,—

“ Scorn no man's love, though of a mean degree
Love is a present for a mighty king
Much less make any one thine enemy.
As guns destroy, so may a little sting.
The cunning workman never doth refuse,
The meanest tool, that he may chance to use.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Love is made of every fine emotion,
Of generous impulses, and noble thoughts,
Love is aspiring, yet is humble too,
It doth exalt another o’er itself,
With sweet heart homage.”

L. E. L.

THE season for excursions for pleasure over lake or mountain, for exploring a country so fertile in loveliness as the neighbourhood which surrounded the Manor, was now quite passed, and gone. The variegated foliage of autumn had

passed into the sear and yellow leaf, falling at every gust of the November wind, crumbling under the foot of the passenger, or sleeping on the quiet surface of the lake. The summer birds had all departed, but Arthur Balfour still lingered in the country. Harry Percy had not yet arrived—the world still held him fast—a few more thousands were to be lost or won, a few more draughts of such amusements and pursuits to be quaffed, in which his existence had been spent, ere, he wrote, “urgent business would allow him to tear himself from *detested* London, to refresh his weary body and mind with the delightful peace of the country, and the charming society of his Sutherland relations.” Though nature had changed her face, the aspect of affairs within the Manor was unaltered. The same merry party galloped over the hills and plains, or climbed the mountains, to gaze on the dark beauties of a winter landscape—the same group partook of

fireside enjoyments, home-bred happiness, and all the comforts, that the hours of long, uninterrupted evenings afford. But the hearts of all — were they the same? Do the circling months ever revolve without finding some change in the heart of man? its dearest joys perchance are fled—a sparkling dream has vanished away, or some feeling, or passion found an entrance into the heart before unknown. And so was it here. During the last three months, (short indeed did they appear,) two hearts at least, had by degrees suffered a change, but so insidious and gradual were the steps by which the change advanced—that neither of the individuals were quite aware of the alteration in their feelings, until at length the intruding sentiment had obtained full possession of their minds, and it had become too vividly—painfully felt, to be longer concealed from themselves. And then Arthur Balfour began to recognise the spell which had robbed him of his

former unbounded freedom of soul—for never before had he—

“ Made one mortal eye,
The lonely star of his idolatry”—

never before had the sound of one voice power to make his own lips tremble, whilst he spoke, or cause his firm heart to palpitate. But was it the proud Maud that had woven this spell—that proud girl! would *she*, so easily yield her heart to one, who had never poured words of love and adulation into her ear—from whom she had only received the affection and attention she might have claimed from a brother—the Maud, who had been so sought, so courted? It is more consistent to suppose that the gentle May might have suffered her young heart to be entangled in an attachment, which her innocence had invested with the idea of a sisterly affection. But no, it was not the voice of May, which faltered when she spoke his

name, *she* could meet unmoved the gaze of his clear blue eye—her step was as light—her spirit as joyous as when she first saw Arthur at the calm lake's side.

It was indeed the bright, elder sister whose proud heart had bowed beneath the power of a first love—a love from which at first she earnestly strove to fly, but vainly—and the softening influence of that passion, which “refines the thoughts, and heart enlarges,” gave a new attraction to her beauty.

If she had been lovely in Arthur's eyes, in all her pride, and gaiety, how much more beautiful did she now appear, when under the subduing influence of this new feeling. Her lustrous eyes, how much sweeter was their expression, and her rich voice how far more melodious did it sound to his ear, now that a deeper tone of feeling was blended with its music !”

And Arthur ! why did he not fall at his fair

cousin's feet and confess his love ? Why was he so faint of heart, when all seemed to smile upon his love ? He could not have been so blind as to imagine she would frown upon him.

Another feeling struggled within the heart of the young man—a feeling partaking both of pride and honour !

Honour suggested—“ Who is it I love ? ”—the answer came,

“ The rich heiress of Sutherland Manor ! ” and poor Arthur remembered their relative situations. She, for whom her parents might have justly expected an exalted destiny ; and he, a comparatively poor relation ! It was indeed a painful reflection, and was he to abuse the hospitality—the unfailing kindness of his friends ? was he to frustrate their dearest hopes, by intruding his love upon the gifted Maud, by endeavouring to engage her affections ?

Pride suggested, "What will the world say? Arthur Balfour going to marry an heiress? He had his wits about him, and was wiser than we thought, when he left the gaieties of London to ruralise in Cumberland; a golden bait allured him to the seclusion of Ullswater. She is a monstrous *spec*—he has played his cards well---he has certainly won his heiress!"

"I must leave Sutherland," he mentally exclaimed, after he had distracted his mind by such thoughts,---"I must leave Sutherland---I must not have such base---such sordid motives attributed to an attachment which Heaven knows! is disinterested---is pure---Oh! that she were poor!"

But though he resolved upon taking his departure, the spell which bound him to the spot, was too potent; and week after week found him still at the Manor. His manner towards Maud however changed, his words

grew cold, his demeanour restrained and embarrassed ; he carefully avoided finding himself alone with her, in whose society he had hitherto walked and rode, in free and happy confidence.

His conversation was now addressed exclusively to May — by her side he walked and rode.

And Maud, she saw all this and wondered ! Was she to be thus shunned—thus thwarted ? She the delight of all hearts !—had her charms failed to inspire love to one, who had possessed himself of her young affections ? What could be the cause ? Had her pride---her caprice disgusted him ? but no, she had scarcely ever given vent to these failings in his presence. Oh ! that she had been less kind---less amiable ! Why had her usually invincible heart, at so early a period of their acquaintance, been led thus willingly captive ?

And for a time her spirit drooped under the agonising thought, that hers was unrequited

love. But not for long was Maud cast down, hers was not a spirit to---

“ Let concealment like a worm i’ the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek, nor pine in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy,
To sit like patience on a monument
Smiling at grief.”

No ! she raised her drooping head, and resolved to investigate the matter, and learn the whole truth, and if she found her love had been wasted on one who did not value and return it --- to call it back, and tear it from her heart, cost what it might.

A pang shot through her frame at the first glance she gave into her heart. It was May on whom were now lavished the smiles --- the words of cordiality --- of affectionate regard, of which *she* was wont to receive so large a portion; had she been supplanted by her gentle, unobtrusive sister? She even remembered with a mournful sensation, her jealousy of Arthur's attentions to May, in

their infantine days---of mirth and unalloyed happiness.

But no ! a second glance and she was satisfied on that point ; she gave a third --- a long, steady, scrutinizing inspection, and then a thrilling sensation shot through her heart, and told her that she *was* beloved ! and she smiled once more, her own proud, beautiful smile, at her blindness in having mistaken the embarrassed air --- the faltering voice --- the averted eye, for ought but the love of one, who fears to shew that love.

“ And why does he fear ? Oh coward ! does he think I love him not ? Well, let him fancy it, the uncertainty will make him prize it more, when he is convinced that it is within his grasp.”

How long Maud would have persevered in the apparent gay carelessness which she again assumed, proudly rejoicing in the new-born conviction, that she had complete power

over the heart of Arthur Balfour, we know not---suffice it to say, that after having inflicted many a pang, for the pain his cowardice (as she termed it) had made her suffer, circumstances once more turned her own weapons against herself.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Oh there are evil moments in our life,
When but a thought, a word, a look, has power
To dash the cup of happiness aside,
And stamp us wretched.”—

L. E. L.

It was one of those rainy afternoons, so prevalent at that season of the year, but though gloomy was the appearance of the weather, the young people rather hailed with satisfaction, an occasional *thoroughly* wet day

---a day sufficiently stormy to preclude all hesitation, whether to go out or not---Maud and May were always provided with resources, which rendered them independent of circumstances, but certainly they had never enjoyed dark, wet days so truly, as since the arrival of Arthur Balfour. He would sing, he would converse, as they wandered for exercise through the long picture galleries, looking as lovely with their flowing ringlets, as the representatives of the far famed Sir Peter Lely, by which they were surrounded.

Merry and musical, rang the echo of the glad young voices through the lofty vestibule, when Arthur perchance challenged his fair companions to a trial of skill at battledore and shuttlecock, and how proudly did Maud exult over poor May, when, one lucky day, she kept up the strokes to a far higher number, than her usually more successful rival had ever yet reached. And as she stood on the dark oak floor, breathless from her late

efforts, her graceful form erect, her classical head thrown back, her cheek flushed to a bright crimson, she looked indeed the very emblem of majestic beauty.

Young men and maidens beware ! for even at the simple game of battledore and shuttlecock, hearts may be lost and won !

Then again as the slender fingers of the sisters, traced the flowers on their embroidery frame, Balfour would entertain them with tales of his travels in foreign lands, or with his voice, "clear, symphonious, yet distinct," read aloud some new publication.

But on the present day, Maud and May sat quietly in their mother's boudoir, the former, apparently so intently occupied with

"The wreath that cannot fade,"

which she was working on the canvass, that she noted not the pattering rain, which beat against the window, nor did she seem to desire any interruption to the deep silence, which had for some time reigned in the room.

But the eyes of May often wandered, and she frequently paused in her work, to listen for the accustomed footstep, the usual tap at the door, which a short time ago, would have been heard long ere then, and at last she exclaimed, looking towards her sister,

“ I wonder why Arthur does not come to read to us.”

No answer—a short pause ensued, and then May continued—

“ Shall I go and call him ?”

“ Oh certainly not,” replied Maud hastily, “ I suppose he is more agreeably engaged—however, just as *you* please—I am going to sing.”

And as if awakened from a profound reverie, by her sister's voice, she pushed back her frame, rose from her seat, and walked to the window ; then after gazing for a moment on the dreary scene without, moved towards the door.

“ Dearest !” said Mrs. Sutherland, raising

her eyes from the letter she was writing, will you bring me, from the library, the second volume of Scott's Life? I feel weary, even after the slight fatigue of bending over my paper. This weather disagrees with me. I shall lie down on the sofa presently, and perhaps, good, little May will read to me."

Maud smiled, nodded assent, and left the room, and we must follow her into the Gothic library, with its oak panelled walls, covered with pondrous tomes of ancient lore, and volumes innumerable of modern literature. Mr. Sutherland and Arthur Balfour were there, busily engaged in writing letters, the latter seated in the embrasure of an oriel window. They both raised their eyes when the door opened, and a light step was heard. Mr. Sutherland gave a fond smile at the intruder, who walked across the room to a tier of books, her graceful head erect. Her arm was extended to reach the volume she sought, which was placed high above her, and in bring-

ing it down she also disarranged, at least a score of others, which fell to the ground, creating no slight noise and confusion.

On first entering the room, Maud had cast a furtive glance on Arthur as she passed him, and an arch smile played on her dimpled cheek as she did so, but he had returned it, with one very sad, and as she turned towards the book-shelves, he had resumed his pen, and continued his writing.

However at the noise of the falling books he started up, and Maud, who having watched the downfall, with a half-frightened, half-amused countenance, at length exclaimed—

“ There, Mr. Balfour ! now I have given you some work to do for me ; at least, if it will not interfere with the very agreeable and absorbing occupations which have engaged you all day.”

“ Agreeable !” he murmured in a low, mournful tone, as he stooped down to raise the fallen books, “ far, very far from being agreeable !”

“ Then why continue them ?” she replied,

"I never do anything I find disagreeable."

"Duty to oneself and to others, sometimes forces an unfortunate man to do what is very repugnant," was the grave answer, pronounced in the same suppressed voice.

She looked at him for a moment, with a puzzled air, but then said laughingly,

"Oh! I suppose that is a hint, that I should assist you in the disagreeable duty of picking up the books, but as you are so dutifully inclined to-day, I shall leave it all to you; for it is anything but agreeable to me, either to break my back by stooping, or to hear a sermon—Mr. Merton dines here to-day, so we can have plenty of preaching this evening if we desire it."

And she turned to depart, but stopped when she reached her father's side, and kissing his forehead playfully said,

"There! I have performed one piece of duty at any rate, which is not very disagreeable to me."

Mr. Sutherland laid down his pen, and

passing his arm round her waist, fondly returned the kiss.

“Do not leave us,” he said, “What—you must?—this is too bad; you come in—disturb us, by doing as much mischief as possible, and then you run away!”

“Mamma is waiting for her book,” replied Maud.

“If you had come half an hour sooner, you naughty little girl, instead of harm, perhaps you might have done good,” continued her father; “you might have persuaded that gentleman,” and he looked towards Balfour, “not to commit a very ungracious act.”

“What! the duty of which he has just been boasting so heroically?”

“I cannot think there is much duty in the case. Arthur has written to his uncle,” and Mr. Sutherland took up a letter directed to the Earl of B——, “announcing his intention of paying him a visit in Herefordshire on Saturday next, and from thence proceeding south-

wards to some other friends. Now you know he certainly promised not to desert us till after Christmas."

No answer did Mr. Sutherland receive, and he continued,

"He is a very shabby fellow; he knows I shall require his services, to help to entertain Harry Percy, who will be here next week. I am half inclined now, to throw the letter into the fire, but he is so obstinate on the subject, that I fear he would only write another. What do you say about it Maud, shall we venture to burn it?"

Still there was no answer; the little hand which had been pressed within her father's during this speech, became so cold that he looked into her face, and started with alarm on seeing that the colour had fled from her lips, and her eyes were fixed upon him, with a troubled, bewildered expression; he felt too, that her frame trembled violently.

He was on the point of anxiously enquiring

if she were ill, when a sudden thought flashed through his mind ; he therefore refrained, and kissing her again, even more fondly, he gently said—

“ Well ! I see you are impatient to take the book to your mother, I will not detain you—go dearest !”

And Maud left the room, her step as firm, her head as erect, as when she entered it.

Arthur had returned to his seat in the recess, before the words of Mr. Sutherland had been spoken ; his back was towards them, but he had listened almost breathlessly for an answer from Maud ; he heard with agonizing suspense the pause which succeeded her father's communication ; and when at length he ventured to turn his head, he only caught sight of her fluttering garments, and the closing of the door. Mr. Sutherland did not resume his pen for some time, but, with his head resting on his hand pondered deeply.

Towards dusk the weather improved, and

the two gentlemen left the house together, for a short walk before the half hour bell rang, but there was now a slight restraint visible in the deportment of Mr. Sutherland towards his companion. Balfour was fully aware of this, and though wholly unconcious of the cause, it struck a pang into his heart ; almost in silence he walked by the side of his host, and returned to the Manor anything but happy.

CHAPTER X.

“ Mightier far
Than strength of nerve, or sinew, or the sway
Of magic potent over sun and star
Is love, though oft to agony distress,
And though his favorite seat be feeble woman's breast.”

WORDSWORTH.

MAUD quitted the library with the sinking heart of one, who, by a few words, had felt her hopes crushed — her happiness dissipated. — With a strong effort however, she strived to assume an air of calmness, until she had fulfilled

her mission ; with a steady step she entered her mother's boudoir, laid the book on the table, and then almost unperceived by her parent, or sister, again quitted the room. Stunned by the suddenness of the recent shock, she could, at first, scarcely collect her scattered senses ; she paused and leant against the hall table for support, and with eyes distended, and lips apart, strove to recal all that had occurred.

The painful reality soon came rushing back into her heart, and with it the full consciousness of all her misery.

She could have thrown herself on the ground, and wept aloud in agony, but startled by the sound of footsteps approaching, she rushed to the drawing-room door, entered—and flinging herself into a large arm chair, buried her face in her hands, while tears — burning tears trickled through her fingers.

“ He is going—yes he is going !—cruel, ungrateful Arthur—and without telling me he

loves me !—I *cannot*, I *will* not endure the shame—the misery of loving one, who spurns—who despises me. *I*, who by one word might bring, many a lover to my feet — and I have thus to debase myself—to weep for the cruelty of a mere boy—yes, a mere boy,” she repeated with angry scorn.—“ But oh Arthur !” she continued in a softened tone, “ there is more nobility—more that is valuable in your young mind, than can be claimed by any of the titled, wealthy, frivolous worldlings, who, for my fortune, flocked around me, and although at this moment I would gladly hate you, I *cannot*—it is impossible—where—where is my pride ?” And again she buried her face in her hands, to hide her burning blushes. It was long ere she again removed them, the violence of her emotion seemed to overpower her, but she suddenly started up—a new thought appeared to have revived her.

“ I know you love me Arthur,” she exclaimed, “ yes, or think you I should not

have strength — pride, sufficient to tear you from my heart — a Sutherland — and thus demean myself! No, I am certain there is some reason,” she continued after a pause, “some scruple in his generous heart. You fear, Arthur, my parents would refuse to give you their *heiress*. Oh proud Arthur! am I not worth the venture — deserving the sacrifice of a little pride? — however it is but natural — it is a bitter feeling to be spurned — rejected! — but for the sake of a little false delicacy you shall not go, when one word — one little word from me, or from my father — for my father would not — *should* not refuse him — !” and the young beauty’s eyes flashed fire, and she stamped her small foot, at the very idea of her will being disputed — Yes,” she continued to think aloud, “I will go to my father, I will tell him all — it is thus that Queens are compelled to act, and for once I must be the Queen !”

She rose, as if intending immediately to ex-

ecute her resolution, but her heart seemed to fail her, and after pacing the room several times with agitated rapidity, she once more sunk despondingly into the arm chair, to ponder further on the step she was to take.

The sound of the first dinner bell rang on her ears, but she did not move ; she scarcely heeded the entrance of a servant, who placed a lamp on the table, stirred the already blazing fire into a still brighter flame, and then departed.

At length however she was roused from her meditations, by hearing the door open, and looking up, she saw Arthur Balfour !

He did not see her, though he passed close to her on his way to the fire place ; he rested his elbow on the mantel-piece, and remained for a few minutes in deep meditation. And once Maud almost fancied she saw him brush a tear from his manly cheek—he certainly sighed deeply—mournfully ; at last he drew from his pocket a small morocco case, opened it, and

gazed upon its contents. It was a little gold ring, with a single, though very fine diamond, and had belonged to his mother ; he had long, anxiously, desired to place it on the finger of one of his cousins, and had ventured once to express this wish to Maud, but she gave him no encouragement ; it was on one of her days of tyranny, and she coldly replied—

“ I have a diamond ring.—Papa gave me a beautiful hoop, last birthday !”

But she now felt a thrill of joy, at the idea of receiving any gift from his hands—of listening to the words of kind affection, which assuredly would accompany it ; and though her heart beat almost audibly, she bent forward, and softly murmured,

“ Arthur !”

He started and coloured, as if he had been detected in some unlawful deed, but drawing near her, he said, gazing with some surprise at her dishevelled tresses, and flushed cheeks, on which the traces of tears were still visible,

“ I had no idea you were in the room—I brought down this little ring, in the hope that May would give me the pleasure of seeing her wear it before—I—leave—since—!”

He paused, for Maud had suddenly risen from her seat, and turned her large, dark eyes full upon him, while the blood rushed in torrents to her fair face, even to her temples, and the hand with which she tightly grasped the arm of the chair, trembled violently. At length her pent up feelings burst forth.

“ May !” she exclaimed, “ why is it always May ? and why is Maud to be slighted—avoided—despised ? tell me the reason Arthur ; answer me, I command you,” and she strove to throw more fierceness, and less of tenderness, into the expression of her speaking countenance, but in vain ; glistening drops would start, and quench the fire of her flashing eyes, and in a softened, agitated tone she exclaimed,—

“ I have not been accustomed to such treat-

ment Arthur, never before have I been constrained to ask— to ask any one to—not to hate me, but—but---you are going to leave us, and I would not---would not part so coldly. I have been ungracious, no doubt capricious---but surely not sufficiently so to make you hate me.”

“ Hate you !” cried Arthur in great agitation.

“ Yes indeed, Arthur,” interrupted Maud, speaking rapidly, incoherently, “ I did not intend to drive you from those with whom you profess to be so happy—I am the cause of your departure, for to me only are you changed—to me, who thus humble myself to ask you not to hate me ; *I* who till now, cared nought for love, or hate, save from my parents—my sister !”

Again poor Arthur, half beside himself, with amazement, joy, and agitation, would fain have spoken, but his impetuous companion

continued to pour forth her excited feelings, in a torrent of words.

“ I have learnt to value your friendship Arthur, and I would not willingly forfeit it,— Oh, we were so happy, and now I am so miserable, tell me then before you go, how I have offended you—why you hate me ?”

She sank back into the chair, at last, exhausted, and covered her burning face with one hand, while the other was seized and pressed to the heart and lips of him, to whom her words were addressed. No longer was he silent—he was beloved—could he doubt it ?—therefore what should—what ought to prevent his declaring his love ?

And he did declare it ; on his knees he poured forth the history of his love—his doubts---his scruples---his wretched fears !

“ Yes dearest, sweetest, loveliest !” he added, “ your dear words have broken the chain, which so long bound me to silence---I

dared not to say, that I aspired to your affection, superior as you are to me in every way---so richly gifted---so bright --- so beautiful---but I adore---I worship you. Nay one little word more, one kind word to assure me you forgive my presumption."

Like one, who by the touch of some magic spring, has suddenly set some mighty machine in motion, sat our heroine---petrified at the effect her power had produced. She almost unconsciously suffered him to remove the hand from before her face, to place on it the little ring---to press it again and again to his lips ---and then once more she strove to speak--- But what she would have said was interrupted, for at that moment the door was thrown open, and a servant announced " Mr. Merton !"

Like a startled deer she sprang up, darted through an opposite door, flew up the wide staircase---along the gallery---and reaching her own room, sunk on a chair, her eyes fixed,

as if in a dream, on the sparkling gem on her finger, till suddenly there came a shower of tears, and then a proud, happy smile, like a bright gleam of sunshine after rain.

The maid had left the apartment to seek for her truant young lady, and May, ready dressed for dinner, was seated by the fire reading, she turned her head on her sister's entrance, and for a moment was lost in amazement, in witnessing the unusual emotion betrayed by her.

She approached, and throwing her arm around her neck, affectionately kissed the flushed cheek, and at the same time, May's eyes were attracted by the sparkling ring upon her finger. The colour mounted to her face, and for a moment there was a pause, but in the next, she again embraced her sister, and burying her face in the bosom of Maud, exclaimed,

“ Ah, so you have stolen my ring, you naughty sister !”

And Maud felt that she was weeping. She pressed May in her arms, and calmly related all that had occurred, and when the latter again raised her face, her eyes were beaming as bright with happiness as those of the joyful Maud.

A headache was the excuse she made for her sister's absence from dinner, and Arthur saw by the smile she gave him, that she knew all.

He was grave and silent as he sat beside her, and so was Mr. Sutherland—Mrs. Sutherland and Mr. Merton, had nearly all the conversation to themselves.

Immediately after the long and weary repast, tedious to all, save the good clergyman, Mrs. Sutherland hurried to her child's apartment, where she found her lying on the sofa, looking so joyous—so blooming—chatting gaily with Mrs. Power, who as she said, “after sending in her dessert, had just

stepped up, with a cup of strong coffee for her dear young lady," that the relieved mother, after playfully chiding her for the unnecessary alarm she had caused, insisted upon ringing for her maid to smooth the ringlets, which were floating rebelliously over her neck and shoulders, in such wild disorder — and then, leaning on the arm of the fair girl, they descended to the drawing-room.

There they found Mr. Merton who had made his escape from the dining-room, in order to have a little chat with Mrs. Sutherland on parish matters.

With what changed countenances, did Mr. Sutherland and Arthur Balfour appear, when in about an hour they entered the Saloon. They were pictures of perfect happiness! All fear — every scruple had vanished; the declaration of Arthur's love, had not only been sanctioned — approved, but welcomed — joy-

fully received by the father of his beloved, who indeed by its avowal, beheld the prospect of the fulfilment of his dearest wishes.

It was joy to the mother — joy to them all ! The young lovers most assuredly looked upon the past moments of doubt and fear, now changed into smiles and happiness as—

“ Emblems of hope and love, through future years.”

Gladly would Arthur have recalled the letter to his uncle, but as this could not be, he was obliged, most reluctantly, to leave Sutherland Manor, to pay his promised visit to the Earl. In a few days he departed—only a fortnight however elapsed before he again found himself by the side of Maud.

The parents were anxious, that the young people, should know more of each other before any regular engagement took place ; but Arthur Balfour was pacified by receiving a promise, that should the affections of both

stand the test of some months' trial, he should obtain, ere he joined his regiment in the spring, a formal assurance of receiving, at a fixed period, the hand of the beautiful Maud.

CHAPTER XI.

“ He was a man
Versed in the world as pilot in his compass,
——and he spread his sails
With vantage to the gale of other's passion.”
L. E. L.

It was on a clear, frosty afternoon just two days before Christmas, that a travelling carriage dashed furiously through the quiet little village of ——, bringing hosts of villagers to their doors to gaze upon it, as it

whirled past, followed by the noisy shouts of numerous little urchins, and the barking of every little dog in the place, from the butcher's large mastiff, to Mrs. Hazell the applewoman's half-bred, spaniel puppy—all was curiosity and commotion in this usually quiet spot.

“A visiter to the Manor!” was the universal surmise, and the Britscha did stop at the massive iron gates, which were instantly thrown open wide, by a silver haired old woman, but it entered not the park.

The consequential looking valet on the rumble, merely delivered a brief message, and the inside passenger putting out his head, on which he wore a graceful looking, black velvet travelling cap, nodding familiarly and good humouredly, cried out in an elevated tone,

“A merry Christmas, Mrs. Grove! how are you my good lady? Bless me, as fresh and good looking as ever—a perfect ever-green! The family well at the Manor? All's right!—get along boys—precious cold it is!”

and hastily pulling up the glasses he laughingly muttered, "The old woman is as deaf as a post — no use wasting powder and shot upon her, at any rate."

The post boys once more cracked their whips, the horses darted off, and skirting the palings of the park, they crossed the fenced carriage path on the common, and then drew up before the rustic porch of "Percy Castle."

The steps were let down, the traveller sprung from the carriage, and was heartily welcomed by Mr. Sutherland and Balfour, who in shooting costumes stood ready to receive him, and whilst Judith and a pretty damsel (a pleasing antidote to the old crone) bustled out to assist "the gentleman's gentleman," to unburthen the carriage of the carpet bags, heavy dressing case, and large, leather writing desk, &c. &c., Arthur Balfour, who accompanied Mr. Sutherland, was introduced in due form to the renowned Harry Percy, of

whom he had heard so much, and who now shook him warmly by the hand, and expressed great pleasure in making his acquaintance. They entered the comfortable, little sitting-room, and whilst he warmed himself by a blazing fire, the newly arrived looked about him with an air of extreme satisfaction.

“ Well, upon my word this *is* snug !” he exclaimed, “ but what trouble you must have taken on my account ; you see I was determined at all events to eat my Christmas dinner with you—I cannot tell you how charmed I am, to find myself here at last — thought I never should have got out of town — never should have managed it !”

“ I suppose London is empty now,” said Balfour.

“ Not a soul in it,” Percy replied, “ and what with the tiresome business with which I was engaged, and the infernal fogs, I thought I should have died of it ; as it is I am extremely ill. How fresh you look old fellow !” he con-

tinued with great animation, giving Mr. Sutherland a hearty slap on his back, "upon my honour, no one would take you for ten or fourteen years older than myself—quite marvellous!—all well at home?"

Mr. Sutherland could not say they were all well; he shook his head when he spoke of his wife's weak state of health.

"Ah yes, I am indeed grieved to hear how delicate Mary has become—dear Mary!—Well! she and I must nurse each other---can't possibly be worse than I am---I assure you it is true---perfectly true---a complete wreck---quite done up! But by the bye, what is your dinner hour? Seven---well, you may expect me, and I'm as hungry as I have ever been after the longest run; better for the country air already, I shall go and dress instantly."

It was but a short walk to the Manor, across the park, and in bad weather a bed or a carriage, was always at his disposal; and Harry Percy promised to become a regular guest

at the dinner table. Though denominated a fine gentleman, he certainly was not of that class of modern dandies, who fear a little wind and weather, and who, as Mr. Sutherland remarked to Balfour on their way home, "take such especial care of their persons, that it might be imagined they were composed of no more durable, or waterproof material than silver paper, or, as the nursery song declares,

" Of sugar and spice,
And all that's nice."

Arthur laughed at this philippic of his companion, who continued,

" You may laugh, but I assure you my poetry is very applicable to the subject; it is disgusting to witness the extent to which self-indulgence has reached amongst the young men of the present day, it seems indeed that their own ease and gratification are the sole aim of their lives; even in the most trivial matters, the foible creeps out. Enter a

modern drawing-room, and instead of the profound respect formerly paid to the aged, you will now see, the merest boys indolently lounging on the most luxurious couches, or reclining on the easiest arm chairs before the fire, whilst their elders and superiors are obliged to content themselves with any chance seat which the impudent puppies may have rejected. The era of gallantry is also gone by, for even the presence of the fair sex is no longer a check to this species of selfish impertinence. Often have I blushed to see a delicate young girl, in a ball-room, weary with dancing, remain standing nearly a whole evening whilst some dandy --- too fine---too lazy, or too stupid to join in the waltz, or quadrille, has never (excepting perhaps at supper time) stirred from the bench on which he has been stretched half asleep---half awake, all the night through. Now Harry Percy's manners are, and ever have been perfect. In society he must ever

shine pre-eminent, and I fully believe that to this undeviating politeness and easy, good breeding---his *empressement* to anticipate the wishes of those around him---his being, in short, as the French so well express it “*toujours aux pieds des dames*,” he owes a great part of that unbounded popularity which he enjoys amongst the softer sex, who so greatly appreciate that charm of manner which he so peculiarly possesses. But the dressing bell rings and here we are at home, so my eloquence must cease at present.”

CHAPTER XII.

“ Full many a lady
I have eye'd with best regard ; and many a time
The harmony of their tongues hath into bondage
Brought my too delighted ear, for several virtues
Have I liked several women ; never any
With so full soul, but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she ow'd ; but thou
So perfect, and so peerless, art created
Of every creature's best.”

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN Arthur Balfour entered the drawing-room before dinner, he found Mr. Percy already arrived and standing before the fire, chatting with his uncle and aunt.

Mrs. Sutherland was but a few years older

than Percy, and he was associated in her mind with all her earliest recollections. She had been left an orphan at an early age, and was brought up and educated in the house of her half sister, who had married the wealthy Mr. Percy.

Mrs. Sutherland had tenderly loved Harry Percy from the infant to the school-boy, from the school-boy to the man, and her sweet face beamed with pleasure at now again seeing him—her thoughts flew back to former years; and she could not but believe that he was the same warm-hearted, affectionate being he was wont to be, when she gazed on his frank, bright smile—his soft expressive eyes!—was it possible that the canker-worm of vice, should have blighted and destroyed the beauties of his soul and mind? No it could not be!

Arthur also thought, “Can this be a confirmed *roué*, a ruined gamester?”

Maud and May at this moment entered—Harry Percy hastened to meet them, and May received from him the same warm embrace,

to which she had been accustomed from her childhood, but whether it were that Maud drew rather coldly back as she extended her hand to greet him, or that he was too much occupied in gazing at her beautiful face, he contented himself with merely pressing her hand affectionately in his. Arthur felt a thrill of satisfaction pass through his frame on perceiving this, and turned a grateful, well-pleased smile on Maud, as she advanced to his side. He was not however at all offended by the admiring attention with which Percy fixed his eyes upon her. Who could look unmoved upon her matchless beauty? he thought, as with pride swelling in his heart, he used the acknowledged lover's privilege, of gazing without disguise on every feature of her face — every graceful movement of her form — whilst she, with a conscious, blushing smile, calmly submitted to the scrutiny.

Harry Percy had turned his attentions to May, who was quietly listening to him as he

told her, how much she was grown, since they had met, and by the smiling glances of his speaking eyes, expressed as fully as if he had pronounced it, in direct terms, how lovely she had become.

At dinner Balfour was fascinated with the brilliant powers of conversation displayed by the new guest, and yet there was nothing in it very deep, or striking, but it was as sparkling and exhilarating in its effects on those who listened, as the champagne he so freely quaffed ; calling up bright smiles on every face as he rattled on, now gaily — now with energetic earnestness — then with deep feeling, according to the subject in discussion.

Percy began to rally Maud with mock seriousness on her London success — on her cruelty to her victims, in leaving them so abruptly as she had done, describing in so droll and lively a manner, the dismay and disappointment her sudden departure had wrought on some luckless aspirants, that though at first

she strove to frown, she ended by laughing heartily with the rest.

He then dropped his tone of raillery, and with real earnestness, besought them, now that May was of an age to be presented, to rejoice the London world once more by their presence ; they were, he said, (begging pardon for the staleness of the quotation) “ flowers too fair, ‘ to waste their freshness in the desert air.’ ”

“ It would be, I think but short lived freshness if transplanted to London,” interrupted Maud, laughing rather scornfully.

“ Ah ! very good !—that I know is a cut at my faded, yellow face—very severe I must say, though—”

“ Oh no !” said Maud laughing, “ you look well enough now, far better than when I saw you in London, for then you were very — very—”

“ *Seedy*, I suppose you mean.”

“ No, for I hardly understand what such

an expression is intended to convey, but you were certainly not a good specimen of the freshening powers of London."

" Ah ! very true — upon my word you are rather hard upon me — I see I must take care what I say to you in future, Miss Sutherland, but I suppose I was pining with envy at seeing others flocking round a bright star which I dared not approach."

" Well you did assuredly keep at a profound distance, I must own."

" Of course, of course ! the attentions of an old fellow like me, and a cousin too, would have been very much *de trop*, when so many handsome young men were in the case ; I make a point never to interfere, when such is the state of affairs — would'nt presume to do so."

" Oh !" continued Maud carelessly, and curling up her lip, " you need not have been afraid—you would only have been treated like the rest—one more added to the list would

have made little difference ; you would have sunk into the same scale with the others I dare say, and not have been remarked !”

“ And shared the same fate,” he gaily exclaimed, not at all disconcerted by this uncomplimentary speech, rather different from the treatment he was accustomed to receive from rosy lips ; there was however an arch expression in his eye, as he went rattling on in the same animated tone.

Arthur thought him no less agreeable when the ladies retired ; however he soon left him *tête-a-tête* with Mr. Sutherland, concluding that he must have many subjects to discuss, and he was too glad of an excuse to join the party in the saloon.

Had he suddenly returned to the dining-room he would have been startled—amazed ! for he would have seen all the bright, sparkling gaiety, which had so captivated him, totally vanished from the face of the fascinating Harry Percy, and in its place the wretched, care-

worn, harassed countenance of one, who with bitter energy gave the details of his ruined fortune, his blighted prospects ! and with remorse and despair related the story of the disgraceful meshes into which his unbridled, unconquerable passion had entangled him ; and Mr. Sutherland, though willing to compassionate and assist the unhappy man, could scarcely restrain feelings of anger and contempt, at the detail of vices and weaknesses which had produced such lamentable results.

But he knew how worse than useless would be admonition or reproach ; the die was cast—he could but sorrow over the most melancholy of all spectacles, a splended specimen of the Maker's works — lost to himself — lost to his friends, and still more appalling to the idea, in the present state of his heart — lost to his God !

Again however, it was the gay, smiling Harry Percy, who some short time after, was seated by the side of Mrs. Sutherland, and

with subdued cheerfulness questioned her with affectionate earnestness on the state of her health, and called up bright smiles to her face by expatiating on the subject most dear to her—her children!—dwelling on their beauty—particularly on the loveliness of Maud, and expressing himself with the warm, though calm interest of an old and anxious friend. He then reverted to the days of their mutual childhood, and added with a subdued expression, pressing the hand of Mrs. Sutherland in his---

“ Though changed, sadly changed since those happy times, dear Mary, one feeling of my heart must ever remain the same—ever unaltered—my love—my gratitude to you, who, from the moment of my birth, have been my dearest, and best of friends.”

At length music was asked for by Mr. Sutherland, and as Maud walked to the instrument followed by Balfour, a thought seemed to strike the quick, observing eye of Harry Percy; something of a serious nature

was evidently going on in that quarter he saw at once, and after a moment's scrutinizing glance at the lovers, he bent towards Mrs. Sutherland significant looks, and in a low voice questioned her on the subject. At first he was answered only by the smile, but she ended by confiding to his attentive ear, the whole history of the prospect of an engagement between Maud and Arthur.

A long pause ensued.—Harry Percy seemed absorbed in thought, and he spoke not for some moments.

Whether from vanity, which made him tenacious of commanding especial observation and consideration, in short of being the chief object of attraction, or that he thought engaged lovers threw a sort of restraint over society in general, certain it is, that Harry Percy had ever expressed an inveterate antipathy to their presence, and always said to a female relation, who till her death presided over his establishment at —.

“ Invite whom you like, and as many as the house will hold, only pray let us have no engaged couples, I cannot stand them, for of all the bores in the world they are the greatest. I would ten thousand times rather have twenty old women here, nuisances as they are, than one pair of acknowledged lovers—to flirtations I can have no possible objection !”

Perhaps some idea connected with this feeling crossed his mind, during the pause, which followed Mrs. Sutherland's communication ; he however soon rose and joined the party at the piano-forte, and was ere long making himself very agreeable to his cousins ; and though it was midnight ere Harry Percy departed, the evening passed very swiftly to all the party.— Harry Percy was so agreeable, so delightful ! Before they separated for the night however, (as is ever the case, on the departure of an unfortunate individual from a family circle) the new visiter was talked over, his merits and demerits were canvassed.

Balfour was charmed with his new acquaintance and declared that his powers of fascination even exceeded his expectations.

“ Oh Arthur !” said Mr. Sutherland, “ you are only like the rest of the world ; few escape from the irresistible captivation of his manners---that outward gloss which I fear has swallowed up all the inward merit of poor Harry’s character. It is very sad to witness the wreck of so naturally fine a mind---the effects of an evil course of life. When in his society, I own I can never help loving him, and delighting in his presence, although I know the feeling is morbid.”

“ Might not Mr. Percy still be turned from his present career ? is it not possible, that by forming new ties, his pursuits and his habits might change, and cause his mind to incline to better things ?” continued Balfour ; “ remember the old saying, ‘ A reformed rake often makes the best husband.’ ” Mr. Sutherland shook his head.

“ God forbid,” he exclaimed, “ that any one I love should ever make the trial. A woman must indeed be bold to risk her happiness, for the mere chance of her attractions and influence, alluring the selfish, corrupted heart of a worldling from the vices and follies he has hitherto worshipped, especially a gambler ; her love and welfare would soon be of less importance in his eyes than the turn of a die, or the speed of a horse, for such is the occupation and aim of his life. Love is but a secondary consideration, Arthur—an amusement !”

“ But, my dear sir,” interrupted Balfour, “ we know what miracles a real attachment has in many instances wrought.”

“ My dear fellow you argue like a young and inexperienced man, but you know not Harry Percy — do you suppose he would be long satisfied with the attachment of *one* devoted heart, when all his life he has been accustomed to the idolatry of so many. — No !

delightful as Harry Percy appears to the outward eye—rather than see a daughter of mine become his wife, I would follow her to her grave, for there would be peace for her in death, but not as the wife of Harry Percy—of a Gambler !”

They were all silent for some moments, there was something in Mr. Sutherland's manner and tone, whilst pronouncing the last words, that chilled all their hearts.

Mrs. Sutherland however soon ventured a word in behalf of her absent favourite.

“ One little word of extenuation however, I must say in favour of Harry Percy,” she exclaimed, “ whatever may be his faults, he still retains the reputation of being strictly honourable and straightforward, and certainly he is possessed of generous and liberal sentiments ; he has fallen a victim to the greedy and subtle sharks by which he has been surrounded.”

Mr. Sutherland smiled, but sadly, and then murmured to himself.—

“But how difficult it is to persuade the world of the honour of a *Gambler* !”

Well might Mr. Sutherland have thus exclaimed, could he have read the thoughts which passed through Harry Percy's mind, as he bent his way across the park, with the keen, frosty air blowing on his face, and the pure, bright stars twinkling above his head.

“Maud Sutherland is decidedly the most splendid creature I have seen for a long time,” he soliloquised. “If she created a sensation in the world, a year ago, when her beauty had not arrived at perfection, what would she now do---and still more in a few years?—and that lucky young dog Balfour is to be the possessor of this bright, lovely girl, who looks with scorn on all save him—who baffled all the most practised hands in London! By Jove, I don't half like the fellow! I hardly know which becomes her most, the proud, contemptuous glance of those glorious eyes, or the tender, melting air, which they assume, when she

speaks to or looks at him. He must be a clever fellow to have managed so well—opportunity—nothing like opportunity!—And yet, Master Balfour,” he said half audibly, “I should like to try how soon I could unseat you from your exalted pinnacle! She is worth a little trouble—how superior to all the women I have made fools of! It will be no easy task; I shall have all her pride and love against me, but courage Harry Percy, you have *very* seldom failed! It will be an amusement and excitement whilst I am here, and will help to pass away time. Yes I will try, I am determined---so *garde a vous*, fair Maud! or rather, Arthur Balfour, look sharp after her heart—it is now yours, my boy—but there is no telling how long it may so remain!”

And again he quickened his pace, and pursued his way, exulting in his project, without bestowing one single reflection on the happiness he might crush—the hopes he might destroy—or the wrong---the sin---he was about

to commit, in trifling with the feelings and affections of an innocent young girl, the daughter of the friend, who throughout his whole life had loaded him with benefits, and for whom, not an hour before, he had professed the utmost gratitude and affection—and all for what? the mere gratification of vanity, pride, and selfishness.

He reached the door of the cottage, it was open, and taking a candle from the hand of his servant, he hurried up stairs, and was soon in bed ; there to dream of Maud Sutherland, and the treachery he was meditating against the peace of Arthur Balfour.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Life now is life—’tis bliss indeed—
A scene of fascination ;
And eyes that weep and hearts that bleed,
Seem spots in the creation—
We think that every coming day
Will still be calmer---brighter ;
That hope’s gay wings will grow more gay,
And life’s light chain still lighter !”---

DUNCAN GRANT.

CHRISTMAS was always a happy season at the Manor and its environs. The poor tasted largely of the bounty of their patron, and blessings were invoked on the heads of that family, who, indeed, humbly endeavoured to

further one of the designs of their great Master's advent---"Peace upon earth and good will towards men."

Christmas was also a merry time at Sutherland; the customs and gambols of ancient days, now nearly obsolete, were still retained at the Manor.

The tenants and domestics were feasted on barons of beef and ale, in the great hall decorated with holly and evergreens, and there Christmas sports and dancing went on, often honoured by the presence of the superiors of the house; and the stately Maud and the delicate May, might often be seen, all smiles and affability, mingling in the dance with a sturdy farmer as their *cavalier*, or, the refined Harry Percy, and the gallant young soldier, gaily footing it away with pretty country damsels, in their stuff gowns, and coarse, gloveless hands.

No other company was ever invited during this season; Mr. Sutherland wished it to be as much as possible a holiday to his servants,

therefore their occupations were not encreased by guests in the drawing-room. Three weeks however after the arrival of Harry Percy, carriages began to roll along the broad avenue the door of the Manor, and successions of visitors were day by day welcomed by its inmates.

The two young lovers did not derive the advantage which a large party in a country house often affords. Two hearts may be more closely drawn together in a crowd, and there enjoy more real communion with each other, than in a small domestic circle ; they fancy themselves less observed, less commented upon ---even at the noisy dinner-table, where every tongue is busy, every eye occupied, soft glances may be then safely exchanged, sweet words ! heard only by the one, for whom they are exclusively intended.

But Maud had a conspicuous part to play, for her mother's health rendered her incapable of any exertion, and she was obliged to take her place on every occasion Arthur

Balfour soon found that he must make up his mind not to expect much individual attention from her. He however bore the deprivation very manfully ; it was a new delight to see her move about---

“ The star of the goodly company—.”

to hear the whispered remarks and exclamations on her beauty---her grace ! and to know that he would one day call her his---his own ! ---to think---to feel that his smile---his admiration were alone prized. Arthur Balfour was at this moment far too happy, to murmur at the attentions, which his beloved was in courtesy called upon to devote to the guests of the Manor ---all seemed bright to him, all joy, peace and future happiness !

It very soon became evident to all, who was the fortunate being that had obtained the rich prize. More than one of the assembled party, had come with hopes beating

high in their hearts, and speedily were they laid low, by the composed indifference with which their advances were received.

Eyes were now turned to the paler star, the fair May, whose quiet grace and beauty, to say nothing of her large fortune, were to some almost as attractive, as the still brighter charms of the heiress; but the naïve simplicity with which she received attentions and adulation, was equally discouraging to their hopes and expectations.

And how did Harry Percy amuse himself all this time?

He reported himself on the invalid list, and consequently seldom joined the sportsmen, who sallied forth very early to make the most of the short time that remained of the shooting season; but an hour or two before luncheon, he generally made his appearance in the drawing-room, where his presence was always hailed with pleasure by the several

ladies there assembled—and under cover of music, which was always going on, he contrived to make as much havoc, as the sportsmen in the woods.—True, his shots chiefly consisted of a word, or a look ; but from him they were as powerful in their effects, as whole volleys of fire from any other quarter.

Harry Percy was certainly unrivalled in dexterity and skill, and a great part of this skill consisted in the art he possessed, of making each fair one in turn believe that to her alone these soft words and glances were directed.

Walks and drives filled up the afternoon, and then the ladies retired to their rooms to dwell upon the honeyed words, the bewitching compliments of the all fascinating Harry Percy.

And he always at this hour adjourned to Mrs. Sutherland's boudoir, and seated before a bright, cheerful fire with her and her daughters, passed, what he denominated, the hour of the day worth all the rest.

“How delightful — how reviving !” he would exclaim, “after the nonsense, the folly, I am forced to talk all the morning, in order to make myself agreeable, in obedience to your orders, Maud, to be allowed the *entré* to this little nest of peace, and to sit with those I so dearly love — to be able to say what I really think, to throw off all disguise, and artificial sentiments, which with those sort of people, one is forced to assume — and to allow oneself to be natural and at ease.— Oh ! if I had always had such society to fly to, I might have been what, alas !---I am not now !”

It was thus Harry Percy would speak, whilst a deep melancholy diffused itself over his countenance, and into his wonderfully expressive eyes, and he would rest his forehead on his hand, and remain for some time apparently buried in painful thought : even Maud, in these moments could not forbear a feeling of pity, for one who seemed formed for

all that was good and attractive, and who proved so striking an instance of a blighted character.

It often happened that Mrs. Sutherland, more exhausted and fatigued than usual, retired to the quiet of her own dressing-room, and the trio were left to themselves. Harry Percy would then exert himself more than ever to be agreeable, and whether gay or sad, he always succeeded in making the time pass pleasantly and quickly away.

He frequently spoke of Arthur Balfour, but as if ignorant of the *affaire de cœur* between him and one of his listeners; sometimes however a significant glance of his speaking eyes, directed at May, plainly told her that he knew more than he would fain make them suppose. He always showered the warmest praises on Balfour, though there often mingled with his commendation, a tinge of something, which neither of the sisters particularly liked—a sort

of patronising tone, never used unless towards a person considered beneath one. This had often caused the proud blood of Maud to mount to her face, and fire to flash from her indignant eyes—but May wondered she was so patient—that her sister, who possessed so little of the spirit of forbearance, and endurance in general, should submissively suffer him to assume such a tone and manner towards one, whom *she* considered in every respect, second to no man save her father.

Once Harry Percy ended some encomium on Arthur, by saying he was a person who would be greatly improved by a little more knowledge of the world. Maud was silent, but May, contrary to her custom, undertook to speak for her sister, and became Arthur's champion: with kindling eyes and glowing checks she exclaimed—

“The world! what do you mean, Harry Percy? You seem to forget that Arthur has

not only seen our world, but the new world—he has beheld two worlds, whereas your experience extends only to one ; and, from your own account Harry, the knowledge of that has—has—” she hesitated for she was not accustomed to say severe things, and blushing at her own enthusiasm, suddenly stopped short in her speech.

Maud smiled and simply said—

“ Arthur ought to be very grateful to you, May, for so warmly advocating his cause.”

“ You are quite right, May, perfectly right,” exclaimed Percy in his usual rapid manner, but in a saddened tone, “ *my world*, as you say, has done me little good. —Heaven grant that Arthur Balfour, or any one you esteem, may be preserved from its baneful influence ; hitherto he has not been exposed to the snares of the world—its temptations ! and therefore he has escaped its dangers—but even were he now exposed to these dangers—” and here Harry Percy sighed and paused, “ he has, lucky

fellow ! an invincible safeguard—the armour of loving hearts around him.—I was far less fortunate on my first entrance into the world.—I was only surrounded by the cold—the subtle—and I am therefore what you now see me !” and he paused and fixed his eyes on Maud, as if he would fain have read in *hers*, what she thought of him—in what light he appeared to her imagination—Was it as the irresistible—the fascinating—the delightful being, he was well aware he was considered by most of her sex—or was she comparing him with her handsome young lover—with his frank, noble heart—his unblemished character—his ardent love—his soul untainted by the world, that world in which *he* had moved ?

Percy could at length almost flatter himself that the former feeling prevailed, for the proud indifference with which she had at first treated him, seemed to be gradually fading away.—But then, if Arthur's step or voice was heard, her eyes would sparkle—her cheek flush, and

she would receive him with a smile, which would assuredly have laid low the hopes of any less experienced, less successful conqueror of hearts, than Harry Percy.

It was in his society that Arthur Balfour usually found Maud, when, after a separation of some hours, he would hasten to seek her in her mother's boudoir. Harry Percy was generally by her side, though he never failed to relinquish his seat to the new comer ; he however seldom quitted the room, but would engage Mrs. Sutherland, or May, in an animated conversation, which never terminated till the dressing bell rang.

This was annoying enough to Balfour ; he thought that after an absence of a great part of the day, spent in assisting her father to amuse his guests, it was hard, that he might not enjoy at least an hour's *tête-à-tête* with his beloved. He had so many questions to ask—so much to say, which must be whispered to her ear alone. But it would not continue long—a few days and the month would terminate,

and the visitors depart. Then he would have all his time to devote to her only, and no one to monopolise her attentions but himself; and this idea gave him unbounded joy, and enabled him to endure with patience the annoyances of the time being.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Away !---I do condemn my ears, that hast
So long attended thee.---
Thou wrongs’t a gentleman.”---

SHAKSPEARE

It was the last evening — the party at the Manor was about to separate on the following day, and right glad were some hearts amongst them, that so it was to be.

And the host himself rejoiced that they were

to be alone—for with alarm and grief he saw that the exertion and excitement his wife had unavoidably undergone, had weakened and exhausted her; and the invalid, on her part, could not disguise how ardently she panted for the quiet and peace of their family circle.

“Come and take a stroll with me, Balfour,” said Lord Percival, as they left the dining-room the same evening. He was the son of Lord Balfour, and consequently cousin to Arthur.

It was a clear, moonlight night, innumerable stars bespangling the heavens, and seizing the arm of his relation, the young lord led him through a glass door on to the terrace.

A perfect calm reigned without, the stillness being alone broken by the merry voices of the company within, which reached the ears of the two young men, as they sauntered past the drawing-room windows.

“Now I would wager my existence, Balfour,” was Lord Percival’s first remark “that

you would twenty times rather be gazing on your Venus—on the star of your idolatry in that room, than on the planet Venus, shining so brilliantly, so gloriously above your head ?”

This was not contradicted.

“ Well, I feel no scruple in detaining you a short space, as I leave you to-morrow to bask in all its brightness, without interruption I hope. I could not take my departure, my dear fellow, without congratulating you on what you appear to wish to keep so profound a secret. Why, I know not, unless indeed you fear being shot through the brains by half a hundred would-be rivals—but you need not fear *me*, and to set your mind at ease I will confess that your goddess from the first, was too dazzling for my weak sight.”

Arthur smiled proudly.

“ Ah !” he continued, “ I see by your face that you are thinking of the fable of the fox and grapes—but no—I own that my heart has been subdued by the softer, milder rays of that

pale star by her side. But," he added laughingly, as he raised his eyes to the glittering firmament, "that same little star is Mars, I believe, which is therefore a shockingly inappropriate simile — so in plain terms, leaving astronomy and astrology, I must confess, that if the pretty May did not look so coldly kind upon me, I should be very much tempted to fall at her feet, and offer her my hand and heart."

"I admire—I laud your taste, Percival; you will indeed be a most fortunate man, if you succeed in gaining the affections of so perfect a being as May Sutherland."

And Arthur in a moment had erected a fabric in his imagination, based on the union, at some future time, of his two cousins.

It was not to every one that he would thus joyfully have bestowed his sweet sister, as he already called her; but he loved and esteemed Lord Percival, and warmly expressed his sincere

wishes for his success in winning the fair prize.

“ I did not bring you here however,” resumed the young lord, “ to speak of my own hopes and affairs, but of your prospects, Balfour ; therefore give me the authority to congratulate you, by confessing (I will keep your secret if it be one) that you are engaged to her,” and he again smiled a merry smile,

‘ Whose eyes are loadstones and her tongue sweet air.’

(as you were singing to-day,) and whose—

‘ Sunny locks hang on her temple like a golden fleece.’

How can I adequately describe her perfections?—in plain terms tell me, however, Arthur, are you not engaged to the rich and most beautiful heiress of Sutherland Manor—come, confess—confess my dear fellow !”

Balfour hesitated — he would willingly have proclaimed his happiness, but he hardly knew whether he was justified in so doing, unsanc-

tioned by Mr. Sutherland, who had not given him permission to make it publicly known; however he felt sure that his cousin did not ask the question out of mere curiosity but from real interest in his welfare, he therefore ended by fully disclosing to him the exact situation of affairs, existing between himself and Maud---in short the whole history of their love.

“Not absolutely engaged?” was his listener’s comment, when Balfour had concluded his story, and there was a tinge of disappointment in his voice.

“Not exactly! I have just told you so,” said Arthur impatiently, “not yet, but in a few days it will be decided.”—

“Yes, yes!” interrupted Percival, “I understand,” and there was a change in his countenance that puzzled Balfour.

A pause of several minutes ensued, broken at length by the young lord’s demanding abruptly---

"How long, bye the bye, has Percy been staying here?"

"About seven weeks," was the reply.

"How long does he remain?"

"As long, I believe, as he finds it agreeable, or rather as long as his affairs render it necessary that he should lead a retired life."

Lord Percival gave a long, expressive whistle, which seemed to comprise more meanings than one.

"I imagine from what I hear," he continued, "that he will have more difficulty in arranging his affairs than any one is yet aware of, and in my opinion he might just as well have taken his departure for the Continent at once, for mark my words ere long, he will be obliged to do so. But tell me Balfour, do you not think it rather extraordinary that Mr. Sutherland, the personification of honour and uprightness, should countenance and apparently patronise such a man as Harry Percy? there would be nothing remarkable in other

people doing so, but for more reasons than one, it seems to me an instance of great inconsistency on the part of our excellent host."

"Indeed!" said Arthur, "I quite differ from you—I see nothing extraordinary in one so benevolent and kind as my uncle, striving to aid, when in trouble, and receiving into his house, a nephew, who, with the exception of one unfortunate propensity, is far superior to most men we meet with, in the ordinary course of society—he is, at any rate, generous—honourable!"

"Well!" replied Percival, "far be it from my wish to deteriorate from any man's good name—to cast the first stone—but I fear if you asked his creditors, they would tell you a very different story—*mais ce n'est pas mon affaire.*" Percival paused and then in a grave tone continued, "I will without further hesitation say at once what may startle you, Balfour, but pray believe that it is kindly meant. Many blame Mr. Sutherland for introducing

into his house, on such familiar terms with his beautiful daughters, the most dangerous man, the most experienced flirt in England. — I assure you the world censures him very much.”

“ Pshaw !” exclaimed Balfour contemptuously, though the colour mounted to his temples, “ let the world mind its own business — Mr. Sutherland can take care of his daughters, and they, let me tell you, are not formed of such flexible materials, as to yield their hearts to every smooth tongued coxcomb who approaches them. The *world* will soon hear, that there is indeed one fortunate man, who has secured the heart of the beautiful Maud, and,” he added with vehemence, “ let him who would seek to rob me of the precious treasure, beware !”

Lord Percival made no reply to this enthusiastic speech of his young cousin, and Balfour continued.

“ Percival, you look as dismal and serious, as if you suspected that May’s coldness towards

you arose from Percy's fascination ; can this really be the origin of the tirades with which you have been treating me ? ah my lord," he added in a jesting tone, " beware of jealousy, it is a greene-yed monster."

" Balfour !" exclaimed Percival, " time is passing quickly, our absence will be observed, and beautiful as is the night, I begin to feel frost bitten, so I must at once come to the point.—I would not needlessly alarm you, I would merely advise you to keep your eyes wide open—it is not on the heart of that sweet creature, your youngest cousin, that I fear Harry Percy will try his skill—there is a child-like simplicity about her—a calmness of demeanour which will prove her safeguard ; there is no chance of his stooping to seek the violet when so bright a rose is blooming before him,"

He paused, for Arthur Balfour had grasped his arm, and in an agitated and indignant voice exclaimed,—

“Percival ! if you have grounds to justify your thus cruelly darkening my mind with foul suspicion, for mercy’s sake, do not thus seek for enigmatical terms to express your meaning, but tell me at once what they are, and by the bright heavens above !—but no—it is too absurd—too ridiculous to convert the familiar affection of a cousin, and one so much older than herself, into an attempt to possess her heart — and besides Percy knows too well, that her affections are bestowed on another---that her love is sanctioned by her parents, to whom he is bound by such deep obligations---who have received him in misfortune---assisted him in trying difficulties---Percival,” Balfour continued in an agitated and indignant voice, “I should really have imagined an honourable man like yourself, incapable of harbouring such an unjust---such a cruel suspicion !”

Lord Percival shook his head doubtfully, as if to express how much his friend had yet to learn of the world, and its perfidy, and then

again he spoke---with great tact and caution striving to rouse his excited listener only sufficiently to induce him to be wide awake, without torturing his soul with jealousy. He let young Balfour fully into the real character of Harry Percy, told him of the whispered hints he had overheard amongst the guests, particularly from the ladies, who are by far the most acute in detecting such proceedings, that if Balfour wished to be the only competitor for the hand of the beautiful Maud, he would do well to look about him.---That the affection of *cousins* is ever a convenient designation; any one at a glance could detect in the attentions of Harry Percy to Miss Sutherland, a less careless gallantry---a deeper meaning in his manner towards her, than that which he bestowed so openly on other fair ones. Lord Percival also added that he had heard some of the men insinuate, that Harry Percy might now put his powers of fascination to a better use than that of merely gratifying his vanity

---that he might not merely aim at the heart, but at the gold, which would so conveniently repair his shattered fortune.

Much more did he say, and Arthur listened with a scornful smile, as if he thought that Harry Percy was more sinned against than sinning ; but the young lord did not tell him that hints were also thrown out that though when Balfour was present she smiled sweetly upon him---yet when he was absent, she consoled herself with the attentions of her perhaps less handsome---yet from his practised powers of adulation --- more dangerous cousin --- and looked no less graciously upon him.

Lord Percival would not---could not tell him this ; he could not find it in his kind, warm heart to inflict so severe a wound, and besides, he felt that most likely these remarks were unfounded---were the suggestions of envy, malice, and uncharitableness---or perchance of mere idle gossip---he only felt that it was his bounden duty to put his young cousin on his

guard---for Arthur Balfour, noble and honorable himself, could scarcely imagine vice in others. He considered that he had performed his duty, and would now leave Arthur Balfour to act according to his own discretion, and to look after his own interest.

The latter laughingly thanked him for his caution --- in a strain and manner however which showed that he could scarcely appreciate its value. He felt so strong---so confident in the love, which so nobly, generously ---yet humbly glowed in his pure, unsuspecting heart, that he weighed that of Maud in the same balance as his own. He proudly thought,

“ Such love as ours !--- is it possible for any circumstance to alter — any human being to overthrow and destroy ?—no never—never ! death alone can separate us — till then our love will endure—sweet, lovely Maud I am *thine*—*thine* only—and thou art mine for ever !”

“ Come,” said Percival, interrupting his reverie, “ let us return to the house we ; have

been sometime absent from the party, and shall be quizzed for being star-gazers ; some may even accuse us of being moon-struck ; so quick—quick my good fellow to the house. I am sure you will gladly exchange the light of the moon, for that which, to your eyes, is so far brighter—the—

“ Light that ne’er can shine BUT ONCE
On life’s dull stream.”

CHAPTER X.V

“ Many were lovely there ; but of that many
Was one who looked the loveliest of any.”

L. E. L.

“ A THRONGING scene of figures bright” presented itself to the dazzled eyes of the young men when they entered the drawing-room, on their return from their moonlit ramble. Lord Percival observed the hurried, anxious

glance, which his cousin cast on the numerous groups scattered over different parts of the room, till they fixed on the one bright spot where rested his beloved, and though there were many other beautiful women in the room, yet they might have exclaimed with somewhat of truth—

“ Like a snowy dove trooping with crows,
So yonder lady o’er her fellows shows.”

She looked indeed like a young queen as she sat in a large, ancient, tapestried chair, placed at the entrance of a recess at the farther end of the room facing the door, and which was nearly filled with choice plants, shrubs, and flowers, from the conservatory ; just above the spot a lamp was suspended, and shed its silvery light over her person.

Maud was clad in a simple dress of the whitest crape ; no ornament decked her head, save that which nature had so liberally be-

stowed—her luxurious hair descending on her fair neck in long, shining ringlets.

Before Lord Percival and Balfour entered she had been the centre of a knot of gentlemen, but they had dispersed, and she remained in her conspicuous situation attended by one alone—who was leaning over the back of her chair conversing earnestly, whilst she, with a pleased, attentive air, listened to his words.

Arthur Balfour remained for a moment leaning against a marble table near the door, with his coffee cup in his hand. He did not wish to shew Percival that his warning had affected him with painful feelings—but true it was that the iron had entered his soul—his happiness was gone, for he began from that moment to doubt!

Balfour would not however allow to himself that his mind had received a shock which staggered it. He fancied that his friend's eyes must be now upon him, watching every variation of his countenance; therefore, though

he felt an earnest desire to find himself at the other end of the room, at his rightful post, which another had usurped—though he longed to ask her how her eyes could sparkle so brilliantly upon any other but himself? and how she could smile and look so gay, and listen with such apparent interest to the words of another? he with a strong effort restrained himself, and addressed some trivial remark to an old lady seated near him, which immediately elicited from her a long story of which he heard not a syllable, but judging by his silence that he was intently interested, she was no ways disheartened in her powers of loquacity.

Lord Percival read his thoughts, and immediately after their entrance, turned from him, and seated himself by the side of May, scrupulously avoiding even looking at his perplexed relative.

May received Lord Percival with a kind smile, and began immediately to enquire where

he and Arthur had been so long—and then for the first time perceiving the latter, she fixed her eyes on him for a moment, then directed them towards her sister, and when she again looked at Arthur, there was an anxious glance on her usually placid countenance.

Lord Percival took note of all this.

“ You have something to say to Balfour, I am sure,” he exclaimed.

She slightly blushed and replied :

“ Oh no ! at least it was only that my sister was enquiring for him just now.”

But at that moment Mr. Sutherland approached the subject of their discourse, and said in a low tone :

“ Why Arthur ! we thought you were lost ! where have you been ? Maud has been asking for you, and is now looking all astonishment at your preferring Lady Ferrer's conversation to hers.”

Arthur looked up and met the glance of

those bright eyes, and soon he was at the other end of the room.

“Balfour,” exclaimed Harry Percy as he approached, “we hope you are edified by Lady Ferrer’s amusing discourse; we have been watching your face of intense delight and interest, and it nearly made us die with laughter.”

The doors leading into an adjoining room, prepared for dancing, were now thrown open, and Mr. Sutherland desired them to set the example by commencing the ball without further delay.

Arthur offered his arm to Maud.

“You hardly deserve it,” she said as she accepted it, “why have you not been near me all the evening?”

“I have been walking with Percival on the terrace,” he replied, “and when I returned you seemed so agreeably occupied.”

“Oh, I have been talking to Harry Percy

nearly all the time—he is so extremely entertaining.”

“ He seemed so—therefore I would not interrupt you.”

She laughed and said—

“ Well do not look so cross, or I shall wish him back again.”

There was such a freedom from any shade of embarrassment in her manner, as she spoke thus, that Arthur blamed himself for the slight feeling of jealousy which for a moment had darkened his mind—his cheerfulness returned, and he was even magnanimous enough to ask Harry Percy to be their *vis-à-vis* in the ensuing quadrille.

When the set was over, and he was walking up and down the room with his partner, she suddenly turned to him, and in a half laughing, half confused voice said :

“ Do you know that I have promised to waltz with Harry Percy ?”

Arthur started—there had been an agreement between them, that they would never waltz but with each other, in short that they should not waltz at all ; for Arthur had rather a dislike to that dance, and indeed very rarely attempted it. Maud saw that he was displeased.

“ Harry Percy waltzes so beautifully,” she continued, in a half apologetic tone, “ and I really cannot withstand the temptation.”

“ But we had promised each other,” Arthur began.

“ Oh yes,” she said interrupting him, “ it was a very easy and safe promise for you, who hate waltzing and do it so badly—but I will give you the treat Arthur of seeing a specimen of really good waltzing, and then you may take a lesson.”

“ Dear Maud,” replied Arthur in a pleading accent, “ grant me the favour—do not waltz—your father you know has often expressed his dislike to the dance, especially when performed by his own daughters.”

“ Nonsense ! ” she exclaimed frowning, “ my father can have no objection to my waltzing with my cousin, so that excuse will not do—and as yet I am under the authority of no one else.”

They were both silent till they reached the spot where Mr. Sutherland was standing, and then Maud stepped towards him and placing her little hand on his arm, said proudly :

“ Papa have you any objection to my waltzing with my cousin Harry Percy ? ”

Mr Sutherland hesitated ere he replied—then looked at Balfour, whose head however was averted, and saying,

“ I refer you to Balfour ; if he does not object I cannot,” walked away.

Maud coloured and bit her lip.

The music struck up.—Harry Percy arose and approached her, and she cast an impatient glance on Arthur which seemed to express the question, “ Am I to bend to your caprice or not ? ”

He understood it well, and bowing his head gravely, coldly relinquished her arm : this action also told her as well as words could have done—

“ You know my opinion on the subject—but, as you say, I have no right to dictate to you.”

For one short moment she wavered, but in the next Harry Percy was triumphantly leading her to the dance.

Arthur Balfour's heart sunk within him, and he was turning dejectedly away, when his arm was gently grasped, and the words, “ Arthur—dear Arthur, I will only waltz with Harry Percy I promise you—indeed I will not,” fell upon his ear.

He looked up and Maud's tearful eyes were fixed upon him with an expression which made his heart beat once more with exultation and happiness—it seemed as if they were humbly imploring forgiveness—and to whom else would she have thus bowed her proud spirit ?

Maud's partner had left her to desire a particular waltz to be played, and she had taken this opportunity to sooth Arthur, and quiet her own conscience.

Lord Percival who stood near, caught the words, notwithstanding the low tone in which they were spoken.

"Unlucky Arthur!" he thought, "only—only *Harry Percy*! Ah!" he continued as he saw him seat himself by May, "you would have been far wiser had you been less ambitious in your love---your gentle, younger cousin would have suited you much better---how her soft eyes sparkle---how the colour mounts to her fair cheek as he addresses her! what would I give, poor fellow! to disperse the dark clouds which are hovering over your head---but I see the storm is gathering fast."

The meditation was interrupted by his partner, who exclaimed:

"How beautifully she waltzes---how perfect! ---do look, Lord Percival is it not exquisite?"

I never saw Miss Sutherland waltz before---this is the first time she has done so since we came to the Manor. How lovely and graceful she is !”

Yes, there they were, whirling rapidly round most gracefully---in that all fascinating---all intoxicating dance!---Every eye was upon them, even the other couples ceased waltzing, and paused to gaze with admiration---and when at length they stopped to rest for awhile, the eyes of the fair *danseuse* were beaming bright with pleasure, and Percival heard her exclaim :

“ How charming—how delightful !”

“ Delightful — perfect — charming indeed,” echoed her partner as he leant over her, and again his arm encircled her slender waist---once more they were flying away into the mazes of the dance.

It seemed as if they could never weary---they were still dancing when the music ceased, and it appeared to Arthur Balfour, as if it would

have lasted for ever---he thought a waltz had never yet been so interminable.

“Over already !---not one turn more ? how provoking !” exclaimed Maud, as she was led by Harry Percy into the cool vestibule past the spot where Arthur and May sat.

“Poor Arthur !” again soliloquised Percival,
“*only Harry Percy indeed !*”

CHAPTER XVI.

"'Tis strange to think, if we could fling aside
The mask and mantle many wear from pride,
How much would be, we now so little guess,
Deep in each heart's undreamed—unsought recess."

L. E. L.

"Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains."

MILTON.

THE last carriage had rolled away from the door, and the Sutherlands and Arthur Balfour stood on the stone steps till the sound of its revolving wheels, had died away, and then they

turned to one another with enquiring looks which seemed to say, "Now how shall we enjoy our liberty?"

"It was soon proposed that they should all drive to visit a ruined castle, the lion *par excellence* of the neighbourhood, about ten miles from the Manor, and eat their luncheon in an adjoining farm-house. This scheme met with universal approbation, and a message was despatched to Harry Percy to acquaint him of this arrangement.

He sent back to say "he was just up---would dress and breakfast with all his powers of alacrity, and follow them on horseback."

Arthur had lately received, as a gift from Mr. Sutherland, a handsome phaeton and horses; he was very proud of his equipage, and indeed it was perfect of its kind; he begged Maud to allow him to drive her in it. She joyfully agreed to this proposal for she had no taste for the close carriage, which the present

season made it necessary her mother should occupy.

Mr. Sutherland could not accompany them, but he took care to see that his wife had everything to conduce to her warmth and comfort, smilingly bade Arthur be careful and bring his charge safely back, and then wrapping Maud's fur cloak comfortably round her feet he wished them a very pleasant day.

Arthur gave one slight touch with his whip to the spirited horses which immediately sprang forward, followed by the less speedy chariot containing the two ladies.

It was as fine and bright a February morning as ever was beheld ; approaching spring seemed anxiously contending with lingering winter. The ground sparkled like crystal with the remains of the late frost, but primroses here and there peeped forth from the hedges.

The exhilarating effect ever produced by a quick drive through the open air, on such a

morning as this, did not fail to impart itself to Arthur and his companion. All remembrance of the last evening's conversation on the terrace--- of the waltzing---all past grievances vanished from the mind of the young man; the bright being he loved was by his side---her musical laugh rang upon his ear — her dark eyes beamed upon him, and joy — unmixed joy and hope, again like the spring, burst forth to gladden his heart—joy in the present—bright hope for the future !

“ Alas, alas hope is not prophecy !”

As for Maud her spirits were unbounded in their exuberance — language seemed too poor — too insufficient to satisfy them, they overflowed in song, and calling upon Arthur to join his voice with hers, they broke forth into the most cheerful and harmonious strains.—The words---

“ For it is life's happy hour.”

seemed to speak from their very souls as well as from their lips ; Mrs. Sutherland and May smiled, as their ears faintly caught the sounds borne back to them by the soft breeze, and their eyes sparkled with pleasure — they too were happy in their own quiet way.

But the notes of the song also reached another, and he spurred his horse on even more quickly than before.

“ This will never do ! ” he murmured, “ this sounds not like the sighing of a fettered heart. “ Youth’s happy hour ! ” he bitterly repeated, “ dead and lost is that hour to me—never till now, did this heart feel how truly your golden light has passed for ever !—But it shall shine again—yes ! the bright hue of that lovely girl’s smile shall illumine this darkened—blighted heart—blighted before its time by the destructive contact of a vain and empty world. I have hitherto played with love merely for my own amusement, but never have I

truly, felt the passion till now when her whom I could really prize is given to another. Is it possible then, that I, Harry Percy am indeed at last fairly caught? is it indeed *possible*?—The world at least will not believe it—will attribute to me its own mercenary motives—but with all my faults I have never been a fortune-hunter—no one can accuse me of that. But by Jove! the world for once is right—it would be a glorious patch up to my ruined fortune. — Fate! you have hitherto frowned upon me, but I have never yet invoked your aid to assist my love.—Smile on me now thou fickle goddess Fortune for Maud Sutherland must be mine!”

These were the meditations of Harry Percy!

“ But there is no time to be lost,” he continued to soliloquise,

“ If it were done, when t’is done then t’were well,
It were done quickly.”

So said Macbeth, and so say I.—Much is to be done --- there is that young fellow to

disentangle from her heart.---I fancy already that work has made some progress, and the experienced---invincible---victorious Harry Percy will continue to entwine his snares around it.---Courage then, courage! ‘faint heart never won fair lady!’” and with these words on his lips, he bounded forward to the side of the phaeton.

The song ceased when he reached it, the horses’ pace was slackened, a blushing face turned towards him, and a little hand was extended, which was pressed with a fervour which he saw was felt as he intended it should be, and her words of greeting returned with an impassioned glance which he perceived was perfectly understood, for the bright eyes lowered till their long lashes swept the burning cheek; but the next moment the impatient horses received a lash from their driver which made them spring forward at a furious pace, and Harry Percy’s steed starting aside, rearing and plunging, he was soon lost sight of, being left considerably behind by the phaeton.

The rider uttered a suppressed imprecation, but composed his features and smoothed his brow, as he turned to speak to the occupants of the chariot, but still it was not with his usual bland and easy smile---and May said to her mother, "How grave and pale Harry looks!"---Mrs. Sutherland answered, that she was fearful he had much cause for gravity, for the last post had brought him very bad account of his affairs.

The subject of these observations had very soon again reached the phaeton---he kissed his hand most gracefully as he passed it, taking care to exhibit to the best advantage his superior horsemanship, which the fine action of the noble animal he rode fully favoured.

The turrets of the ruined castle soon appeared in view, and in a short time, the whole of the party were seated at a good luncheon, in the farm-house parlour.

But where was the wild gaiety which had possessed the beautiful Maud during the begin-

ning of the drive ? it had indeed been like the uncertain glory of a spring mornig---too bright to last.

From the moment Harry Percy approached the phaeton, a gloom had gradually gathered over her countenance, broken by sudden flashes of pettishness, and irritability. Those who knew her best, probably attributed these symptoms to what, we are unwillingly obliged to confess, was not a rare event---namely, the unromantic and unheroine-like fact, of the beautiful Maud being in a bad humour.

But who could marvel that she should thus occasionally err, when the fault never failed to call forth such proofs of affection--such kindness from others---when instead of chidings, redoubled attention and fondness were ever lavished on the spoilt beauty to win her back to smiles. But this day the pettishness and irritability were assumed, apparently, to hide deeper feelings ; she seemed as if acting a part throughout the morning.

There was no childish sentiment in the startled, thoughtful expression of those dark eyes, or the impatient, anxious tone of her voice ; she was evidently ill at ease with herself, and therefore sought, not to appear so to those around her.

At luncheon the conversation was badly sustained---a cloud seemed to hover round the whole party---and poor Maud ! no wonder she was oppressed and gloomy---a change had indeed come “ o’er the spirit of her dream—

“ Never more will the young heart know
Its joyous hour——
Its childhood is departed.”

CHAPTER XVII.

“ I think on many a wasted hour
And sicken o’er the void,
And many darker are behind
On worse than nought employed.

————— Alas my heart
How widely hast thou strayed,
And misused every golden gift
For better purpose made.”

L. E. L.

“ ARE you going to sit here for ever?” exclaimed Maud as she suddenly looked up, as if awakened from a deep reverie, and met a gaze which caused a bright flush to pass over her cheeks, “ do you mean to remain in this room

all the day, and return home without once having stirred out, to look at the very object you came to see ?”

Mrs. Sutherland was comfortably seated by the blazing, wood fire. The farmer's wife had formerly been a servant at the Manor, and loved her devotedly, as all those who knew her well, ever did. It was her intention to remain quietly there till the time arrived for their return home, for even the easy drive had fatigued the invalid, and she was conversing with Mrs. Meade on the subject of her domestic affairs in which she took a kind interest.

May was playing with the rosy children grouped around her, and Maud had seated herself by the lattice window, her eyes vacantly fixed on the objects without, in the mood described before. Arthur was by her side—he took her hand which lay listlessly on her knee, and strove, fruitlessly, to win her to smiles and conversation. She did not withdraw her hand but averted her face.

And Harry Percy—he had at first placed himself by Mrs. Sutherland, chatted and appeared to take the most profound interest in Mrs. Meade's affairs, admired and caressed her children, enquired their ages and names, and told all the little girls they were very pretty and very tall, and the little boys they were very fine fellows; but at last he moved to a horse-hair sofa opposite the window where Maud and Arthur were seated, drew a newspaper from his pocket and apparently began to read. What—its contents? No—Maud caught his eye fixed on her and Arthur over the edge of the paper, quickly however removed when he perceived he was discovered. She abruptly drew her hand from Arthur and exclaimed :

“ Are you going to sit here for ever ? I thought you came to see the ruins ; if it were only to read the papers and watch the ducks swimming in the pond, we might just as well have remained at home ! ”

“ Well, then let us go,” said Arthur, and he offered her his arm.

“ Oh no !” she replied impatiently, “ having seen the castle constantly for eighteen years, I would rather remain where I am, I have a dreadful headache. Oh, do not stay on my account !” she continued, as Arthur announced his intention of remaining with her ; and she walked languidly towards her mother, and seated herself on a low stool by her side, and leant her head against her knee.

On their first acquaintance, Harry Percy and Balfour had been constant companions and got on very well together — but when once the feeling of distrust and doubt has entered the heart, all unconstrained and social intercourse must cease. The present position of the two gentlemen, destroyed every inclination for a *tête-à-tête* walk, they therefore stopped, as they passed through the little garden, at the lattice

window to invite May to accompany them, and she cheerfully consented to be their *cicerone*.

The society of a young, innocent girl like May, was refreshing, even to a heart fettered by passion and care. It was like the cool breeze on the fevered brow--the clear, sparkling rivulet on the sultry summer day, and as she walked between her two cousins, pointing out to them the beauties of the spot--relating the traditions associated with the ancient pile, her fair face glowing with gentle enthusiasm, her soft, hazle eyes kindling as she spoke, the youthful days of the worldling seemed to rise up before him--those days when his heart was affectionate and pure--his hopes bright and promising--when he was rich in the love of parents -- and of the fair creature, whose daughter, (so like what her mother had then been) now walked by his side. He thought of his own mother's early death--of her grave, which he had wept over! -- sad memories which however had failed to draw his

hopes to that "better land," where he had in his boyhood often loved to think of her.

The young, fair face of May Sutherland revived in the once warm heart of Harry Percy wretched reflections and retrospects of his past life, and brought with them an indefinable longing—a craving anxiety for something to fill up the blank space in his soul; and the wish was independent of any object or circumstance, on which for years his hopes and expectations had been fixed; for what he now panted was the peace which this *world* cannot give! But only for brief moments did these gleams of better things rest upon his mind—he drove such thoughts away like busy intruders—what had he to do with memory? it conjured nought but dismal phantoms.—“I will think of the beautiful present,” he soliloquised—his mind turning to the lovely Maud—“out upon you Harry Percy for a coward!” And had his companions looked upon his countenance they would have marked a smile of scorn. “What

regular folly to feel any compunction on the score of this young fellow Balfour.—I shall be only doing him an act of kindness—she is not in any way suited to him, they are the very extreme of opposites; how much more calculated,” he continued to ponder, as he gazed on May who leant on Arthur’s arm, and was looking up into his face with an expression of such pleasure and confiding affection, nay even of admiration, as they conversed together, “how far more suited is that pretty, calm girl for young Balfour, than her glorious sister! I am sure it would be serving the good youth to forestal him in the love of one who can never contribute to his happiness. He ought to have a more domestic wife—a more yielding one than she will ever prove. No!—she shall shine resplendently in my world, and in my leisure hours, her impetuous spirit will be an amusement.—I cannot exist without excitement of some kind or other. I flatter myself I am a pretty good judge of character, and de-

pend upon it little May is the wife for Balfour ; but the difficulty will be to make him think so."

With all these thoughts crowding upon Harry Percy's mind, it may be easily imagined that May and Arthur had all the conversation to themselves. They had extended their walk further than they had intended, the sun had set behind the distant hills, and it was getting quite dark when they returned to the farm.

When they entered the little parlour, the first object that met their eyes, was Maud with Mrs. Meade's fat, crowing baby on her knee, surrounded by the rest of the children, whom she was delighting with her gaiety and kindness, and who stood gazing on her lovely face with evident admiration ; for children are always attracted by beauty, particularly when combined with good nature.

The shadow had passed from her brow, and as she sat, unmindful of their presence, she looked as if no untoward passions had ever ruffled her

serenity. On first noticing the entrance of the walking party, she slightly started, but took no heed of any one ; she only bent more fondly over the pretty baby, her godson, and shook the coral and bells, her own gift, which hung round his neck, whilst the little creature seized her long curls which Arthur hastened to disentangle from the merciless grasp. She laughed and thanked him, but lifted not her eyes to his face.

Harry Percy had walked straight up to Mrs. Sutherland, who begged him to hasten their departure ; but Mrs. Meade had set out her best China tea-things, and of tea and hot cakes they were entreated to partake---after which the caariage drove to the door, the lamps lighted, for it was already nearly dark.

The weather had become very cold and the farmer predicted rain.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ I thought how love, I thought how hope
O'er the horizon of my heart
Had poured their light like yonder sun,
Like yon sun, only to depart :
Alas ! that ever suns should set,
Or Hope grow cold, Love forget !”

L. E. L.

“ DEAREST Maud, you will not venture in the phaeton I trust,” said Mrs. Sutherland, anxiously, as they equipped themselves in their cloaks and furs, “ No indeed darling” she continued, as Maud signified her intention of so

doing, "I cannot permit it, so you must relinquish Arthur's society for this once, and put up with May's and mine."

But Maud looked dissatisfied.

"I am sure it will not rain," she said, "and how can I be cold in all these wraps?" And she walked to the door, and gazed on a scene, as different from the brightness of the morning, as had been then her mood contrasted with the present gloom. In the mean time her mother called Arthur aside, and begged him to reconcile her spoilt child to the arrangement she had proposed.

Mrs. Sutherland knew that Arthur had acquired an influence over Maud, which not even her indulgent parents possessed—that a word—a look from him had often recalled smiles, which some slight disappointment or contradiction, had for a moment banished.—She knew not the altered state of the case, and as Balfour withdrew "to do his best" as he said, no

one guessed the painful, torturing thought, which called forth the heavy sigh which heaved from his now doubtful heart.

He approached Maud as she stood by the door, and said in a cheerful tone :

“ So, dear Maud, I am not to have the pleasure of driving you home !”

It seemed that he had raised her from a reverie, for she started when he spoke, but then quickly said :

“ Indeed—I was not aware—pray why not ?”

“ I thought it was your mother's wish that you should return in the chariot,” and there was an expression in his voice as he spoke, which told as plainly as if he had added “ Is not her wish your law ?” “ She is fearful,” he continued, “ that the rain will overtake us—I am bound to second her desire, great as the disappointment is to me.”

Maud turned away her head.

“ But really it is not very cold,” resumed

Arthur, "I know now how it can be managed to please us both," he exclaimed, "I will drive the chariot, and you can sit with me on the box, then if the rain comes on, you can easily change, and go inside.—My horses I am afraid would never accommodate their paces to those of the others."

Receiving no answer of dissent or assent to this plan, he started off to make the necessary arrangements.

Balfour found Harry Percy superintending the saddling of his horse, and on hearing of the new plan he asked the reason, and then carelessly said :

"Oh ! if that's the case, you may as well let me drive your phaeton, and the groom can ride my horse."

Arthur Balfour willingly assented, and remained to give some orders to the servants whilst the former returned to the house.—When he followed him and looked into the little

parlour, in order to tell the party that all was ready, Harry Percy was standing between Maud and her mother, talking in his most earnest manner. Maud was laughingly shaking her head, whilst Mrs. Sutherland with a half smile and half frown, was listening to his energetic pleading.—Harry Percy's enunciation was most peculiarly rapid and emphatic.

The next moment he had darted forth, and when Arthur gave his arm to Maud, and led her to the door to assist her, as he thought to mount the box, he heard the words :

“Oh no thank you—I have no wish to play the footman.”

He paused and was about to hand her into the carriage, where Mrs. Sutherland was seated, when the voice of Harry Percy was heard behind them.

“Where is your sister?” he said.

“She is I suppose on the carriage box

with Arthur; he gave up driving the phaeton on the purpose," was the answer in the soft tones of May.

"Oh nonsense! I am to have that pleasure to-night, and you must console the forsaken; I am sure you will do it famously, and be also an excellent substitute."

"Harry! you know I will not," May was heard to say, in a less gentle accent than was her wont as she turned away; thereby preventing the indignant flash of her usually mild eyes from being seen, otherwise it might have surprised her listener as much as did the change in the tones of her voice.

"Maud is this true?" exclaimed Arthur.

"Yes, Harry—" she replied, and those first words were scarcely audible, but she then continued in a perfectly clear, calm voice:

"Harry made some little exertion to overcome mamma's fears and objections, knowing my great desire to return home in the phaeton,

he therefore deserves to be rewarded—and—and I have promised to let him drive me !”

What could Arthur Balfour say ? He would not trust himself to speak—he felt his indignation vehemently rising — not against her but against the *dissembler*, who had thus cajoled — cheated him of her society — But still there was nothing that could authorise his opposing the scheme — and although at that moment the young man would gladly have spurned to the ground, and trampled on the being who, with a sickening shudder, he now began indeed to regard in the light of a rival — as with his careless self-satisfied, self-possessed smile, he triumphantly led away his too willing captive—yet he had to control his indignant feelings and smother his wrath, whilst Mrs. Sutherland bestowed some parting words on the farmer and his wife.

He was roused from his forgetfulness of aught save himself, by meeting the kind,

pitying glance, of his younger cousin, earnestly fixed upon him—but pity is very grating—very galling to a proud heart, smarting under wrong, and he hastened to smooth his brow; and with a forced smile approached her, and asked if they were nearly ready to start.

“That naughty girl,” said Mrs. Sutherland, probably perceiving through all his endeavours to conceal it, symptoms of discomfiture in his countenance, “that naughty girl! gained her point after all, as she generally does.—Arthur there will be a great deal for you to do in the way of reform.” The last phrase was added with a lively smile, but poor Arthur could not return it. “Come, you had better make yourself comfortable with us inside,” she continued, “as you will have nothing to render your cold drive agreeable,” and May nestled close to her mother to shew that there was plenty of room.

He at first looked half inclined to accept the offer, but finally shook his head, and forcing a smile said: "he feared his long legs would only be in their way, hastily mounted the box and drove off.

The fact was that the moment after the invitation was uttered, the phaeton had driven rapidly past and the ringing laugh which in the morning had rang upon his ears like

"The song of a young bird,
As musical as it was bright and wild—."

now jarred upon them like

"Sweet bells jangled, out of time and harsh."

as she gaily kissed her hand to those she left behind. The sound of Maud's laugh struck upon his heart, as the death knell of her love! but he strove to rouse—to reason himself out of the agonised feelings which raged within his breast—to blame—to laugh at his weakness

and folly, in construing what probably after all, was the imaginary phantom of jealousy, called up by the insinuations of his cousin the previous evening ; he would not, could not doubt his beautiful Maud—Thus he tried to reason with himself—poor youth ! how fruitlessly did he strive—the barbed arrow of suspicion had pierced his heart. And Harry Percy ! Without one pang of self-reproach or compunction, he sprang into the phaeton by the side of “ his lovely torment.”

CHAPTER XIX.

“ It is a fearful trust, the trust of love—
In fear, not hope should woman's heart receive
A guest so terrible.”

L. E. L.

IN this short day, apparently so devoid of incident, the destiny of Maud Sutherland had been decided. She had for sometime felt the spell—the hitherto cherished, pleasing spell which had bound her to Arthur Balfour,

gradually passing away and another feeling more subtle, full of painful excitement, but irresistible — erecting for itself a foundation as it were upon the very ruins of the first, and insiduously winding itself round her heart.

No wonder then, that in spirit she wept over the ghost of her first pure love, as it hovered mournfully round her, as if beseeching her to recal it, ere it passed away for ever — sadly whispering into her inmost soul, that with it must depart her own young happiness ; like the injured *Ondine* when imploring, not for her sake, but for his own, the fidelity of the inconstant Huldibrand.

But how was the warning influence of her conscience received ?

Arthur would have been somewhat consoled if he had known how forced was the laugh which had been called forth by the congratulatory words of Harry Percy on the victory she had gained — his praise of the firm spirit she had shewn, in punishing the very ungallant op-

position to her wishes that Balfour had made ; and then some witty speech on Arthur's dismay and consternation, all uttered in a light tone, which shewed of what little consequence he deemed it.

But when this tone changed into the tender, earnest sound of words, conveying deeper meaning, which gradually stole upon her senses, she struggled not against the spell which lulled the stinging of her conscience—she thought not of her heart's danger, but unresistingly gave herself up to the perilous enjoyment of the moment—of feeling that Harry Percy was near her—of listening to the words poured forth so melodiously from his lips—of meeting the glance of those deep blue eyes fixed upon her, with a gaze that thrilled through her frame. “ Did Arthur ever woo like this ? ” she inwardly mused ; “ it was I, who extracted his timid, tardily confessed attachment ; had I not done so, alas too hastily ! he would have left me, and with his well

directed mind, soon would he have conquered a feeling engendered by having been so long, and constantly thrown into my society—a feeling which he only *imagined* was love—but it was *not* love !—perfect confiding love sees no fault or failing in the object of its devotion—and how often has my proud—my wilful conduct, caused a shadow to pass over his brow—he even sometimes presumes to lecture me—to remind me of my duty, and if he is thus as a lover—oh ! how would he be as a husband ?

Thus did Maud continue to meditate, endeavouring vainly to form excuses for her own faithless, cruel conduct.—Even whilst her eyes glistened, and her heart beat with emotion, when Harry Percy with energetic vehemence—yet wrapped up with cautious cunning, spoke words, which were imprinted as with a burning iron upon her heart—still her thoughts wandered to her position towards Arthur Balfour, and shame and confusion, were mingled with her reflections.

“ Arthur I am sure,” she thought, “ thinks me inferior to himself in goodness—never can I give my heart to one, whose love is not sufficiently powerful, to make him overlook and forget all my faults and imperfections.”

Extenuating thus her conduct, Maud endeavoured to feel that she had some right on her side. “ Arthur is very good, very noble I own,” she told herself, “ but I am not ambitious of perfection in a husband, the contrast between us would be too perceptible”—and then she pictured to herself another love—a love which in its strength would overleap every barrier, surmount every obstacle—no circumstance—no consideration would oppose the force of an affection, which beamed forth in every glance—in every word of one, who from his earliest youth, had basked in the smiles of beauty but had—withstood all—scorned all—till her charms had warmed his heart into love. And oh ! she thought, he would worship the very ground on which she stood—adore—even her failings !

And his faults !—she would have the triumph of weaning him from the world — because the censorious condemned him, she would only idolize him the more. Poor Maud ! these or some such thoughts, too confused to be accurately defined, even by herself, passed rapidly through her young mind, during the first part of her drive and her gaiety was assumed and unnatural—as different from her feelings in the early part of the day, as that morning's light, had been from the evening's darkness.

Her companion's voice grew more and more earnest and serious, and when the prognosticated rain began to descend, and he encircled with his arm her slender form, in order to wrap the furred mantle more closely round her, and she expressed her concern that her mother's fears should be realised, and that she should be uneasy on her account, he whispered in a tone that thrilled through her heart, “ She need not fear—are you not with *me* ?—Your mother knows how I love you all dearest

Maud—she knows I would gladly shed my life's blood to be able through life to shield *you* from every blast—you ! for whom I would deem it blessed—thrice blessed to live—to die !—and though cruel fortune has *denied it*—.”

But as if by a strong effort he checked himself, and a deep sigh, and a long pause ensued. This burst of enthusiasm—humbug—or whatever it might be called, for a time recalled, Maud to a sense of what was right.—Harry Percy felt the hand which a moment before had been pressed within his own, quickly withdrawn, whilst she drew herself up, averted her head, and was silent.

But for this he cared not ; he felt that the game was in his own hands—he knew the mighty struggle of her pride against his love, and this very struggle made him glory more than ever in his conquest.—“ Harry Percy thou art indeed invincible !” he inwardly apostrophised.

And Maud trembled at her own abject weakness — she who had ever made it her

boast to triumph over the hearts of others—now to have so little command over her own—was it possible that she possessed so little dignity and command!

But those who have never yet felt the necessity of curbing their own will in the slightest degree—who have ever made the gratification of their own feelings their chief object, considering little those of others, who have used their pride merely as a weapon, to mortify—not as a defence and armour to preserve their own hearts in the paths of rectitude—often find pride, deaf to their call, when its aid is really needed.

Maud at length attempted to break the silence which to her at least was embarrassing, and in a hurried, careless manner, waiting for no answer, proceeded to talk rapidly on indifferent subjects. Her companion perceived her confusion and rejoiced at it.

Mr. Sutherland was standing at the door ready to receive them on their arrival, and

when he pressed his daughter in his arms, as he lifted her from the carriage, her heart smote her, for had not she encouraged—yielded herself up without a struggle to a feeling, which were her parent conscious of its existence, would fill him with amazement, grief, and unbounded indignation. ? The father always so fond, and kind, having led her before a blazing wood-fire in the hall, and gently relieved her of her numerous wet wrappings, for the first time perceived who had been her companion, and enquired with some surprise, what had become of Arthur. Maud answered not, but cast her eyes upon the ground.

Harry Percy however in his usual off-hand way, explained the affair in a manner more satisfactory than true ; and Mr. Sutherland, perfectly free from all suspicion, and believing that the heart of his daughter was wholly Arthur Balfour's, attributed her changed demeanour to the circumstance of her having been deprived of his society.

"You look pale my darling child, and how cold these little hands are!" he remarked as he took one of them, and gently chafed it within his own.

"They are so indeed," rejoined Harry and the other hand was seized by him, whilst, with the admirable power he possessed, of rendering the most trivial circumstances amusing and interesting, he edified Mr. Sutherland by relating the events of the day; and the colour soon returned to Maud's cheeks, and warmth to the little hand which fluttered like a bird within his.

And thus was the group arranged round the fire when the chariot drove to the door and Mr. Sutherland hastened to receive the party.

Maud attempted to withdraw the hand which remained in that of Harry Percy—she had no inclination at that moment, to meet her injured lover's glance, and wished to depart ere he entered the hall. But before this could be accomplished, her

hand had experienced one more fervent pressure, and then it was raised to Harry Percy's lips ! Scarcely had it been released with a long drawn passionate sigh, and Maud but made a few hasty steps towards the oaken staircase, when Arthur entered, shaking the rain from his hat and great coat.

He started on seeing Maud, and to her question, enquired in a tone of assumed gaiety, of whether he had enjoyed his drive, he replied with a sad smile :

“ No ! how could I enjoy it ?—And you Maud— ?”

There was nothing like reproach or anger in his voice or manner, but his words smote painfully on her heart, and she exclaimed with a flash of her large, sparkling eyes, and in a bitter, passionate accent, intended for him who had brought all this altered state of feeling upon her, and caused her to give pain to one so excellent :

“ I have not enjoyed my drive at all I assure

you.—I wish I had gone in the chariot—with
—with mamma.”

Harry Percy smiled an incredulous, scornful smile, but neither Arthur nor Maud perceived it—the former had averted his face, probably desirous of concealing the emotions which were rising in his heart, as he listened to her words, and Maud, having concluded her abrupt, confused sentence, placed her little foot on the first dark, shining, oaken step, and hastily ascended the stairs.

CHAPTER XX.

" I need not say how, one by one,
Love's flowers have dropped from off Love's chain."

L. E. L.

" Is there a heart that music cannot melt ?"

BEATTIE.

A CALM succeeded the events of this last day—a delicious though deceitful calm, which served to lull, in a degree, the suspicion and agony of Arthur Balfour. There existed no longer any reasonable grounds of suspicion on the subject

of Harry Percy's attentions towards Maud. It seemed indeed that restraint, and coldness had sprung up between them. Maud was to all appearance his own, and Arthur Balfour too happy to sink once more into the sweet dream of love, sought not to awake from it ; he feared to dispel it—and would not therefore trust himself to question the reality — he dared not ask himself if it were the same love that had at first made him so supremely happy—he did not trust himself to question whether there was not in the demeanour of the beautiful girl, too much courtesy, too much of ceremonious attention—the sad signal—

“ When love begins to sicken and decay.”

in short too much cold, calm kindness to suit the character of love—at any rate---the love of Maud Sutherland!

He dared not allow himself to remember, how little this would have satisfied him once---

he was too glad to escape the storm, which at one time threatened to burst, and crush his hopes for ever, to seek now to dissipate the ominous stillness, which had succeeded the formerly bright sunshine.

What abject cowards does love make of the stoutest hearts !

But still there were moments when a word --- a look, would make him feel the change, "the shadow on his brow --- the sickness at his heart" --- then again a smile --- a peculiar tone of voice, speaking of by-gone hours, would cause the shadow to depart, and once more his young heart would beat with hope and joy.

In his moments of doubt and sorrow --- and often did they recur --- he had not even the consolation (if so it could be deemed) of blaming his suspected rival, for it seemed as if Percy scrupulously avoided the society and conversation of Maud. And this had been

for some time Percy's policy---policy of which Arthur knew not fully the danger, though he who practised it---so experienced in the nature of the heart of women, fully estimated and valued its power.

One evening however, Arthur and the two sisters were assembled by the desire of Mrs. Sutherland at the Piano, but May's voice had alone been heard; in vain had she called upon her two companions to join her. Arthur had repeatedly shaken his head, saying he was in no singing mood---for a few hours before, a pang had been inflicted on his heart, which at last determined him to break through a state of things which even the certainty of misery, would be even more tolerable to endure.

May's voice carried him back to the first evening spent at Sutherland---and then his mind rapidly traced all the past circumstances from that day to the present time. At last Maud,

who had hitherto been seated on an ottoman opposite to Arthur --- her eyes fixed in sullen silence on the ground, only raising them occasionally to glance hastily towards the opposite end of the room where Harry Percy was seated, apparently in deep thought, suddenly started up, and how did his heart throb, as she exclaimed in an animated tone, as if wishing to rouse herself from her late gloom!

“ Arthur pray do not look so grave and dismal; although you may have lost the powers of conversing, perhaps you can sing to us.--- No!” she continued in a gay, but commanding strain, “ I must insist on hearing a solo. May you shall choose one for him---come! no refusal---I *will* have it.”

The truth was she had seen a smile of satisfaction and triumph pass over the countenance of Harry Percy, as he glanced at Arthur's mournful countenance; he knew well the pain he was inflicting on the young man, and he seemed to glory in it. Maud saw all

this --- her better feelings prevailed, her heart smote her and then it was that she turned to Arthur, and desired him to sing; he prepared to obey her commands, whilst May selected a solo.

What language can speak so eloquently to the heart as that of song---well may the poet say---

“ Amid the golden gifts which Heaven
Has left like portions of its light on earth,
None hath such influence as music hath.”

The very soul of the young man seemed to gush from his lips, in the following words of the song selected by May.

“ Changed, changed ! I feel that thou art changed,
Though change thou dost deny ;
I feel it as the storm is felt
Ere seen in yonder sky.
Slight are the signs that shew the heart,
And slight those shewing thine ;
Ah why should time exhaust THY love,
And yet not alter mine ?

Those eyes that used to fill with light
When I have gazed on thee,

That voice which into whisper sunk,
Whene're it spoke to me ;
Those eyes are cold—that voice has lost
That low peculiar tone ;
Till now I did not know how much
I thought thou wert my own.

Be altered, faithless, what thou wilt,
But let me still believe
That ONCE I was beloved again—
That thou didst not deceive.
My present is a weary lot,
My future is o'ercast ;
My heart, which dreams and doubts distrust,
Turns sadly to the past."

Arthur Balfour had a beautifully plaintive and sweet toned voice, and the pathos and deep feeling with which he breathed forth words so accordant with the painful emotions passing in his heart---the melting tenderness so unconsciously expressed in his eyes, as he turned them towards Maud---was truly touching. When he arrived at the concluding stanza, his voice became low and tremulous---and his fluttering heart rendered the two last

lines scarcely audible to those who were at some distance from the instrument---though to the two persons near him they were perfectly distinct.

Little did some of his audience imagine, how appropriate to his own feelings were the words he uttered ! Mr. Sutherland exclaimed from the farther end of the long saloon :

“ What a dismal ditty Balfour ! ”

And Mrs. Sutherland added,

“ Yes it is indeed—and really from the manner you sing it Arthur, one might imagine that you were pouring forth the sorrows of your own heart.”

But some of the listeners did not appear equally unconscious. As he finished the song, he met the eyes of May raised towards his, with a look of the deepest sympathy—it was a look he had frequently encountered lately, but never had he so fully appreciated the kindness of its expression as at this moment, and he thought that hitherto

her affectionate solicitude had only met with coldness and neglect ; bending over her therefore, he said in a low, kind voice—

“ Thank you dear May, thank you for finding me words to express what I so deeply feel.”

He was turning away, but a gentle touch of his arm and an expressive glance from her whom he addressed, caused him to direct his looks once more towards Maud, whose face during the latter part of the song had been averted. It was now buried in her hands, and the pearly drops were fast trickling through her slender fingers, whilst her bosom heaved convulsively.

May rose hastily—not to comfort her, but to leave that part to be performed by one more able, and to prevent, if possible, the observation of others being directed towards her. She saw not till she moved, that Harry Percy was standing behind her chair, evidently earnestly watching the deep emotion of her sister.

Maud perceived it not.—Bitter remorse for the suffering she had caused—for her treachery—her inconstancy, were at that moment exercising their chastening influence on her heart, and when at length Harry Percy approached her, and was about to seat himself by her side—she repulsed him with a look which baffled, even him.

To hide his confusion and discomfiture, he walked, seemingly as if it had been his original intention, to the other end of the room, where he was soon engaged in conversation with Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland.

In the deep recess of the saloon, by the side of his beloved, Balfour passed an hour of perfect bliss—so perfect that he almost deemed it equivalent to the misery he had lately endured. He made such good use of that brief hour, that it seemed probable Harry Percy's usurped dominion, once shaken as it now was, would soon totter, bend and fall to the ground, never to rise again.

But alas ! the next morning with the post, arrived a summons, requiring Arthur's presence in Ireland, on military affairs, which admitted of no postponement.

CHAPTER XXI.

“ Farewell!

Shadows and scenes that have, for many hours

Been my companions, I part from ye—

—————With deep sad thoughts

And hopes—almost misgivings!”

L. E. L.

THIS intelligence fell like a thunderbolt on the heart of poor Arthur. One more fortnight and his destiny was to be irrevocably decided. Away from his beloved, that period would appear a century! Still, in the midst of his des-

pondency, he had one powerful sense of consolation. Had he been called away a few days sooner, he would have departed—his mind distracted with suspicion and doubt — now he scorned his previous fears and gloomy forebodings, and his perfect confidence and renewed happiness, served to support him, when the sinking sensation of misery, forced itself upon him, and which in spite of all his fortitude he now felt more deeply, as the moment for departure arrived.

Mr. Sutherland had an engagement in the country town that morning, which obliged him to quit home soon after Arthur had told him of the necessity of his immediate departure. On taking an affectionate leave of his young relative, he spoke with much warmth of the real pleasure it gave him to think of the near connection which would soon exist between them, and Arthur heard with a thrill of joy, tempered however by the saddened tone of Mr. Sutherland's voice, that it was his wife's earnest hope that

an event which she so ardently desired, should not be delayed longer than was requisite, for the necessary arrangements on such occasions.

Arthur knew by the quivering lip of the speaker — the nervous pressure of his hand, what were the reflections that prompted this desire. With her—that much loved friend he had a long and affecting interview—and then he sought Maud, for in half an hour he was to depart.

He found her in the conservatory, tying up the slender branches of a choice rose tree. It had been transplanted by her own hands, on the very day, succeeding the evening, on which the disclosure of their love had taken place, and they had pleased themselves with the idea, that the flower would blossom about the time when they should be formally betrothed to one another—and now two beauteous buds were just appearing, giv-

ing promise of full blown roses in less than a fortnight.

“ Maud,” said Arthur, as he took her hands in his, “ those roses were planted as emblems of hope and love for future years ! when I return to claim this precious hand, and with it the precious heart you promised to bestow on me---let me see one of those roses in your hair, as a sign that your heart is the same---unchanged—as it was in that hour---when you made me so happy. Oh ! my beloved---my own Maud, let the bright flower greet me on my return, speaking of joy and faith---telling me that your love was true and constant---not a moment's phantasy---a dream---a brief dream --- that---” and the colour mounted to his temples, and his eyes flashed with enthusiasm.

Arthur Balfour did not see the vivid crimson rivalling his own, which overspread Maud's face and brow---for she bent over the rose tree,

her long ringlets completely concealing her countenance ; but she interrupted his speech in a quick, cold tone of voice, which sounded painfully on his ear, saying---

“ Arthur, even on the very eve---the very moment of your departure, you still torment me with doubts and suspicions ;” then in an assumed tone of careless gaiety she continued, “ But I hate scenes, so let us talk on other subjects. --- I will certainly wear one of the roses in my hair, if it will gratify you, and the other shall be presented to you accompanied by a couplet of verses hailing you as *Captain* Balfour. But perchance the roses may be blighted before they arrive at full perfection—or some audacious mortal may take a fancy to them—and then,” she continued in a tone of feigned alarm, “ what is to be done ? what will be the fatal consequences—with what care—what anxiety must I guard these precious buds—or never since the fearful tragedy of ‘ Beauty and the Beast ’—or the wars of the

roses, will the queen of the flowers have created such commotion and disaster."

There is nothing that more completely gives the death-blow to romance or sentiment, as raillery or ridicule. Arthur Balfour coloured and felt almost ashamed of his late enthusiasm, and by the time the carriage, which was to convey him away, was heard to drive up, he had forced himself to assume the same light, gay tone and manner as his companion.

But then the sinking of his heart returned, and with a faltering voice and blanched lip, he faintly murmured his farewell. — Empires — worlds would Arthur Balfour have given for one tear — one speaking sign in return — but no !—though there was a proper look of sadness and sorrow, on the part of Maud, it did not wholly satisfy him. — He thought he was entitled to a warmer adieu, than the mere pressure of the hand---he would have ventured to impress a kiss on her lovely cheek, but with a smile and a blush she turned away her head.

However when the last moment came, when Arthur rose to depart---when she had listened to his final---trembling words of affection---and beheld his pale face and glistening eye---a feeling of greater tenderness and grief appeared to pervade her heart, and in a soft tone, which was like balm to the wounded heart of poor Arthur, she exclaimed :

“ Write to me Arthur, and do not be long away---God bless you Arthur !” and thus they parted.

As Arthur Balfour passed through the vestibule on his way to the carriage, he remembered he had yet one more adieu to make---and in the midst of his grief he reproached himself, for even for a moment forgetting his dear, gentle May.---He was preparing to seek her, when he heard his name softly pronounced, and she hastened to meet him. Arthur took her hand and led her into the drawing-room.

“ Arthur ! I thought you had gone without wishing me good bye,” she said with a forced

smile, but she was deadly pale, and he saw tears upon her cheeks.

“And could you believe that I should forget you May, whom I love already as a sister?” replied Balfour.

The fair girl looked up in his face, with an expression, which was like a gleam of sunshine, but the next moment she sighed heavily.

“And will you love me as a brother, May?” Balfour continued, “when I return to claim Maud as my wife---will you be as kind, as you have ever been to me, since the evening when we first met by the lake’s side? And will you promise in my absence” and he spoke in an earnest, almost solemn tone, “to take care of your sister? Let her not forget me, May,” he added in a deep low voice “to no other ears but yours would I breathe what I am about to say. There have been moments---agonising, maddening moments, when the torturing suspicion has sprung up within my heart --- that ---that---that your sister loved me not ---aye

even that she loved another!" He paused, apparently expecting an indignant exclamation from his listener---but in a hesitating and embarrassed tone, she murmured:

"Oh Arthur, Arthur, do not speak thus! she does I hope love you---indeed she does---but---"

Arthur interrupted her by pressing her in his arms as he would have done a favorite sister, kissing the lips that had pronounced the precious words.

"Thank you for those reviving words, darling May," he exclaimed, but when he released her from his embrace, he beheld her as pale as monumental marble. "Why do you look so sad," he continued, "are you not glad that Maud loves me? do you not wish me to be your brother?"

"Oh yes Arthur," she replied, "can you doubt it?---but I know not why it is, a dark cloud as it were seems hanging over us---as if some fearful event would happen during your

absence.---I do feel sad---very sad.---Oh ! do not ! pray do not remain long away."

" Thank you May !" he said in an absent manner, as he fixed his eyes with a penetrating glance, on her blanched cheeks, now bathed in tears, and listened to the painful heavings of her beating heart. The truth was, that Balfour ruminated on the question which suggested itself to his mind — " Why this parting should be so unlike another ?"

He then began to talk of her mother, attributing much of May's dejection to anxiety on her account, and spoke cheerily of the hope he still entertained, that the approaching fine weather would restore her to health---but the dreadful thought of her beloved parent's danger, had never once crossed her mind, therefore she seemed more terrified than comforted by what Arthur said on that subject. He quickly perceived this and spoke of other topics.

" May," he said, " I parted from Maud all smiles, and I believed them to be omens of

future happiness, but your tears and sadness have banished all idea of smiles. --- I shall depart wretched and dejected. What is the cause of this deep sorrow ? tell me I beseech you !”

“ Perhaps I may be very silly---very weak,” she replied.

At this moment a servant was heard approaching,---“ I must go,” he hastily exclaimed, and as he turned to depart, his eye happened to rest upon a large mirror, in which was reflected a view of the walk leading to the conservatory---a cloud came over his brow.---“ Promise me” he said, seizing the hand of May and pressing it within his own, whilst his voice was agitated and earnest in the extreme, “ promise me to be constantly with your sister when I am away.---Go to her now---I left her in the conservatory. Oh, May, do not---do not let her---forget me---if you love me !”

“ That indeed she shall not, if aught I can do will prevent it,” was the answer, whilst May

lifted her tearful eyes to Arthur's face. "But again I entreat you, be not long away."

Arthur once more looked enquiringly at her, but a servant entered to announce that the carriage had been ready some minutes, and impressing a last kiss on her fair forehead, he murmured again, the words, "go to your sister!" and then left her. But did May obey Arthur's entreaties—did she at once seek her sister? No, she stood rapt—without motion—listening to the carriage wheels, as the sounds died gradually away in the distance and then she raised her head; but the object upon which her eyes fell by chance, again plunged her into a profound fit of musing, which lasted some time.

The bright afternoon sun was streaming into the room, and shed its light on a large picture which hung opposite to her. It represented a beautiful boy of about ten years old, with his arms twined lovingly round the neck

of a fair delicate child that leant her head against his shoulders — her golden ringlets through which he carelessly passed his fingers, mingling with his short, crisp, chesnut curls—her large, soft, hazel eyes were lifted up to his face with a look of almost venerating affection, but his eyes were turned away. They rested with a supplicating expression on a third figure in the portrait, another little girl, who stood at a short distance from him, her head erect—her sunny locks flung back—her round dimpled arms waving an adieu, whilst in her dark, lustrous orbs, there was a half mocking—half triumphant air, which seemed to say, “I am going to leave you, and I well know the pain I shall inflict.” May gazed on the group, till the warm life blood had mantled her pale face, and a long, deep drawn sigh heaved from her breast. The sigh was for the blue eyed boy—not for the gentle baby-girl—but whilst she gazed and pondered, varying expressions, as

diversified as the shadows on the hills, passed over her countenance, and contending---overpowering sensations, caused her heart to swell almost to agony, and tears to overflow.

CHAPTER XXII.

“ If ever angels walked on weary earth
In human likeness, thou wert one of them.”

L. E. L.

WHEN Arthur Balfour first became sensible of the state of his feelings towards Maud Sutherland, from scruples of honor and delicacy, he endeavoured to stifle the growing passion, by flying from the dangerous presence of her he loved. He walked, he rode, he sat by the side of May, even as he had done in the days of

their familiar childhood ! Arthur Balfour possessed no innate vanity and never dreamt of danger to the heart of the calm, seemingly, passionless being by attentions so tender, yet lavished with a brother's spirit, nor could any one have guessed that a wound had been inflicted—no, not even May was aware, that her heart had received an impression, which might one day cause her anguish.---All she felt at that moment was a joy reigning within her bosom, which made her step lighter and her heart more gay, since Arthur smiled on her, more than had any other. He appeared to court her society ; he so often called her back when she was about to leave the room, to invite her to walk or to ride ! she thought him noble ---good---next to her father the most perfect man on earth, but that was all---she knew not that her heart---

“ Had filled

With love, as flowers are filled with morning dew
And with the light of morning.”

Or, if the thought had crossed her mind, it was but a brief dream of bliss, for there came a moment!——

She saw the ring which she had hoped would be hers, placed on the finger of her beautiful sister, and she beheld her smiles of happiness ; and then for the first time the secret of her own heart, like a flash of lightning, was revealed to her ; for a moment she felt stunned by the blow, and like the flower weighed down by its dew, she bowed her head ; but it was only for an instant, for when, hiding her face on her sister's bosom, she listened to her proud, happy recital, the pretty flowret again raised its head, and with a bright smile she congratulated her fortunate sister. She was rejoiced for her, although for herself she had just awakened from a sweet dream, which had passed away she thought for ever.

From that hour a new---a different love sprang up in her heart---like---

“ The love with which angels love good men.”

The unselfish girl felt joy in Arthur's happiness as if it had been her own ; and when at length a cloud appeared to obscure that happiness, with what fear---with what anxiety did she watch its progress ! how many a pang did her soothing influence spare him---how many a bitter word, and cold look which she knew would wound, was averted from him by a " soft word which turneth away wrath," from her gentle lips. And then how many a dangerous glance, and still more dangerous *tête-à-tête* was prevented by May, for with all the quicksightedness of her active, jealous affection, she soon discovered the exact state of affairs, and alas ! the real peril which threatened Arthur's peace of mind. The redoubtable, all-powerful Harry Percy, the practised worldling, had often of late felt his conscience pricked, the colour rise to his cheek, and his eyes sink ; and this effect was produced by the quiet, though reproachful tone, or even the penetrating stern glance, of the meek, yielding, insig-

nificant girl, for such he had once considered her. But the hearts of men, are not in the hands of men.—May foresaw difficulties rising rapidly round Arthur Balfour, but she could not turn the current of these troubles; she could only weep for him—pray for him.

And not alone for him did she weep, but for her sister, the real victim—for her parents—whose dearly cherished hopes, threatened to be totally frustrated, and yet they did not—could not see the coming storm.

It seemed so strange—their blindness! her father too, usually so clear-sighted and observant! but his eyes---heart---and soul, were at this time centred in her invalid mother, and indeed his noble nature was the last to harbour suspicions injurious to the honour of another. Often did May long to speak to him on the subject---to warn him of the serpent he was cherishing in his breast, but she dreaded, poor girl! to bring the thunderbolt down upon their heads---to crush their hopes

which were so bright---she had shrunk from being herself the means of waking from their happy dream her unconscious parents --- and now it was too late.---She too well knew the nature of her sister's disposition, too well she also knew that interference now would avail but little. Opposition---reproach would only further excite the fire which was kindling in her heart. No! May felt that she was powerless to avert the impending evil; she must tremblingly await the crisis, and leave the result to Him "who alone ruleth the hearts of men."

It was thus she thought, as she stood gazing on the picture before her, when Arthur departed, and with a tearful sorrowful sigh, she murmured, "Oh Arthur --- why did you love that cruel little beauty, instead of---" and then the vivid blush mantled her pale cheek, "instead of her, who would never have given you the pain --- the grief, which I fear you are doomed to suffer---who would have

loved you. But she does love you dearly, as did that quiet, little girl, you are sheltering in your arms, and she will try her best, (would that she could do more) to turn away the threatening storm."

And then May remembered Arthur Balfour's last injunction, and blamed herself for having disregarded it. She hastily brushed away her tears and left the room to seek her sister.

Alas! May, why did you tarry so long?--- She found her, but not alone.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“ I'll tell thee” said the old man, “ what is life.
A gulph of troubled waters—where the soul,
Like a vexed bark, is tossed upon the waves
Of pain and pleasure, by the wavering breath
Of passions—.” L. E. L.

WHEN Maud turned away after her cold farewell to poor Arthur Balfour, and had listened to his footsteps till they quite died away --- she seated herself on a low flower-stand

which was near, and heaved a long, deep sigh.

But it was not sorrow that called it forth ---she sighed to think that she should actually experience a feeling of relief at the departure of one, whom she had loved so well ; she sighed to think how changed was her own heart.--- She remembered her emotion on the previous evening---the tears she had shed---the happiness she had enjoyed when, for a brief space, those softer emotions had re-entered her heart, she now felt that the feeling had only been " a touch of light—a tone—a song." " The sweet enchantment" was now all gone, gone for ever ! " But why," she exclaimed, a proud smile curling her lip, " why should I sigh and grieve for having shaken off the chains of love ? After all, liberty is delightful, and I am still unfettered !"

But did she *feel* herself free ? One chain had indeed fallen from her heart, but was there not another there ?

A footstep was heard approaching.—

“ She flung from her forehead its curls of bright hair,
Ere those ringlets fell round her, another was there ;
Red flushed her cheek's crimson and dark drooped her eye,
A stranger had said, 'twas her lover stood by.”

It was Harry Percy with a brow of care—
arms folded—eyes bent to the ground, and his
mind probably filled with harassing visions of
importunate creditors—crushed hopes—vain
regrets of the past!—fit meditations for the
ruined gambler.

There was a natural start---a surprised expression, in the dark, arched eye-brows, as he suddenly raised them---a melancholy but sweet smile, as the form of the beautiful heiress met his gaze---the young cousin whom he caressed and loved as a child---the daughter of her who had been the companion of his infancy, and of a father, who had been his generous benefactor and best friend ! Then why such sentimental agitation on his part, and why that rapid change of colour, that strange tremor on hers ?

Never since the drive home from the ruined castle had the cousins found themselves *tête-à-tête*—indeed they had seemed mutually to avoid each other, and even now when Harry Percy stood before her and said in a hurried voice, “I fear I am an intruder, Maud,” she made a movement as if to depart, and faintly uttered the words, “I am going to Mama.”

“One moment first,” he continued, “surely as a *cousin*,” and he laid a stress on the last word and paused for an instant, fixing his eyes on his listener, “a *cousin*, and *one* who loves—loves you---as---as---a beloved---shall I say sister? I may congratulate you on the prospects in store for you.”

For the first time she lifted her large eyes to his face; an eager, disappointed enquiring---almost angry expression, gleamed in those sparkling eyes, and plainly said, “Do *you* congratulate me?”

But she only bowed her head proudly, and as she plucked to pieces the blossoms of a cape

jessamine, and scattered the snow white, perfumed leaves on the ground, quickly answered "Thank you."

Earnestly did Harry Percy again look upon Maud Sutherland, and for a few moments he spoke not---then in a deep agitated tone he exclaimed,

"Cruel---cruel girl---as carelessly as those fair fingers have scattered the blossom of that flower to the winds, have you dispersed my visionary hopes of bliss---by those two little words you acknowledge that my fate is decided ---but no matter---in a few days I depart."

Hurriedly --- vehemently was another flower sacrificed, and the delicate leaves flung away---but no word was spoken.

"It is dangerous---it is wrong for me to remain longer here," pursued Percy. "Oh Maud why did you not send me sooner from you?"

He paused for a reply---and at last she murmured,

“ Why should I Harry ?”

Yes, I shall depart !” he continued, “ and therefore I will—I must speak, only once, of all I feel, ere I plunge again into the troubled, poisonous stream of the deceitful world, there to endeavour to drown—to root out of my memory, the vision of the beautiful—the peerless angel, whose purifying influence revived in my soul feelings of holier—better things—of a brighter—more virtuous existence—who—”

“ Harry !” interrupted Maud, in an agitated and reproachful voice, “ Harry !”

“ Pardon me — forgive me,” he continued, “ I will try to be composed—calm—calm as *your young lover* ! But did he ever—could he ever feel as I do now ? Listen, and then if you *will—then* dismiss me—that moment I leave you—aye and for ever !” Maud spoke not, and Harry Percy continued with more than his usual rapidity and energy. “ When I first entered the world, Maud, young and as yet uncontaminated, I loved a bright and lovely being

—I then stood upon the brink of the abyss which has since proved my ruin. Had one loving hand been stretched forth to save me, I might have been preserved from the disastrous course into which I plunged. On my knees I asked for that hand—Julia Bernard was prudent above her years, her temperament was calm—cold—calculating! but to do her justice, it was not merely selfish feeling, which dictated her conduct; she was amiable and felt solicitous for my future welfare; she told me plainly and firmly that she loved me, but that she also valued her own happiness, and therefore never would wed a gambler—her hand and heart were mine, *if* I solemnly determined never, never more from that day, to touch a card ---approach a hazard-table --- never to set my foot upon a race course---in short to abjure all, and every description of gaming. I vowed ---I promised, but that very evening excited by wine, and my joyous thoughts, I was tempted and persuaded by those subtle

enemies, my companions --- I consented, for the last time, to hold the dice box and throw a farewell *coup* ; Julia I remembered had said ‘ from *that* day ! ’ However, I played, and that evening fortune favored me---I won an immense sum. This sum I determined to dedicate to my lovely Julia, and on the following morning purchased a *parure* of diamonds worthy of an empress. I laid them at her feet --- but never did goddess spurn a polluted sacrifice with more indignation, than did the cruel, cold hearted girl. My jewels, she called the fruits of iniquity, and resolutely cast them from her, declaring solemnly that she never would become a partaker of my guilt, by accepting the wages of sin—that she would never be my wife ! and then in softened accents—in pitying words, more galling, more hard to endure than reproach or harshness, she bade me leave her for ever ! I departed” he continued vehemently, “and maddened by disappointment, and totally reckless of consequences, only

sought to drown my bitter thoughts in the intoxicating pleasures of the world. I plunged deeper than before into the fatal gulph. I gambled day and night. I became in short the world's slave, instead of its idol—but what are its idols but its slaves? while daily, hourly I loathed more and more the thralldom which so firmly fettered me.” Maud listened with mute and absorbed interest to this painful narrative. Harry Percy seemed wound up to the highest pitch of excitement, and scarcely paused for breath as he thus made a confession of his past and present feelings. “Fate—fortune to mock me—to torture its wretched victim, at length led me here—to Paradise on earth, and I beheld angels bright, and pure, and one most beautiful, whose presence, whose companionship, has infused into my soul a breath of Heaven. The world and its vanities vanished from my sight—I dreamt again my early dream of love, but holier—lovelier was that dream. Alas! the vision was soon dissi-

pated—destroyed ; not by witnessing the cold love bestowed upon her by another—no, for could that be love which responded so ill with the overwhelming emotion which was burning within my heart ? One word from the favored youth relieved me from all fear of *his* ardent love.” Maud looked up enquiringly. “ Some one spoke of you,” pursued, eagerly, Harry Percy, “ and in so doing used the word perfection. ‘Perfection!’” exclaimed Balfour, with a calm smile, “ no not perfection, far from it—in beauty perhaps she may be so—but perfection is not expected or required in a mortal woman—defend me from what is called a perfect wife ! ” Maud till now had sat immovable, her large eyes distended, the colour fading gradually from her cheeks to the same hue as the marble statue of Flora, against which she leant her head, but now, they flushed with a bright crimson tint, her eyes flashed, her lip curled with anger. “ I was awakened,” Harry Percy proceeded to say “ from my dream of

enchantment, by your excellent father — by your angel mother ;— they told me they had secured the happiness of their child—her future welfare for life—and how had this been accomplished ? They said that from infancy, you and your young relative had been destined for each other, that the late Mr. Sutherland had extorted a promise from them on his death-bed to that effect, in order that the son of his other grandson might benefit by his property. How skilfully has the fortunate youth furthered their views, by coming here on hearing of this scheme, and so conveniently falling in love (as he would *deem* his cold preference) with the very being intended for him, who though not *perfection*, may, by his judicious management so become, in time.”

“ And she,” exclaimed Maud, starting up, her eyes glistening like sparks of fire, “ she says——Heaven for ever defend me from a perfect *husband* ! Have I then” she continued aloud “ have I been as it were, cheated, de-

coyed into giving my hand to one, who in obedience to command, has deigned to *try* to love me---who looks on me as a proud, spoilt child, that he contemplates training to the meekness of my sister May ; whom he so often holds up as a model for me to imitate ; whom, had she been *the heiress*, he probably would have chosen." Harry Percy watched the countenance of the irritated speaker with concealed triumph and exultation ; she continued, " Well I remember how he struggled---how he postponed the evil day, which was to decide his fate---how nearly he was on the eve of departing, unable make up his mind to the sacrifice of himself. And I---gracious Heavens ! when I look back upon that hour I could go mad with anger against myself."

She paused, for even at this moment her heart reproached her ; had she not been ascribing mercenary, false motives to one who she well knew was the very soul of honor, the most disinterested of beings---she felt she was wrong---very

wrong ! But the words of Harry Percy had stung her to the very soul. “ My father, my mother,” she added in a softened tone, “ how could you act thus—why did you deceive your child ?”

But it was very far from Harry's intention that in her self-mortified pride and indignation towards others, he should remain unnoticed—forgotten—he therefore calmly but tenderly took her hand, made her seat herself once more and then said :

“ Maud I have done wrong in thus disclosing to you, in an unguarded moment, circumstances of which your parents have not thought fit to inform you—but perhaps it is as well—for I am confident they imagine your heart is wholly Balfour's, or would they, kind and indulgent as they are, shackle their daughter's inclination, and sacrifice her to the gratification of their own wishes and schemes ; but I may be mistaken, I may deceive myself—Maud as a brother, I ask, I beseech you answer me,” and

he spoke in a tone as deep, as earnest, as if his very life hung on the reply; "answer me as you would your father; tell me and I will depart, and endeavour to pray for your happiness, with the deep fervour of a brother—tell me Maud," and his voice trembled and his cheek paled, "do you love Arthur Balfour—will his love suffice for your happiness — do you *really* love him?"

Conflicting feelings were striving for mastery in the bosom of Maud—she felt that her answer would decide her fate—and that now the moment had arrived, and she was on the point of relinquishing for ever the love of Arthur Balfour, she remembered what a love it had been, how she had once valued it—gloried in it—and again hastily rising, she exclaimed in a tone of displeasure:

"Arthur alone has a right to ask that question, and he only must hear the answer."

A long, heavy sigh responded to her words, and then another pause ensued. Harry Percy

pushed back from his brow his dark hair, and pressed his hand firmly upon it, and Maud remained for some moments, with her eyes bent towards the ground. At length she raised them towards Harry Percy — contemplated his attitude of deep dejection, and a gratified feeling crept into her heart, which shewed itself in

“ The haughty smile to hide the sigh beneath—.”

which played upon her lips. From between the parted fingers which veiled his eyes, Harry Percy perceived it, and he heaved another sigh—to hide a smile.

At this moment a gentle footstep was heard and May entered the Conservatory.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ My heart is filled with bitter thoughts,
My eyes would fain shed tears ;
I have been thinking upon past
And upon future years.”

L. E. L.

MAY stood for an instant at the entrance of the Conservatory, contemplating, with an uneasy expression on her countenance, the two beings before her. Maud had turned away her head, but Harry Percy slowly raised himself

from his leaning posture, and extended his hand to welcome her, with his usual easy unembarrassed smile.

But no answering smile met his—no hand was stretched forth to receive the one he proffered, and tears were glistening in her eyes.

Harry Percy marked this, and as he drew her towards him, and kissed her forehead, he said :

“ How sad the pretty May flower looks to-day !”

“ Yes,” she said impatiently ; then disengaging the hand he had taken, and turning from him, said to her sister :

“ We shall all look sad to-day, for Arthur is gone !”

“ Then you *love* Arthur very much.”

“ This was said with such a significant glance of the eye, and in a tone of such deep meaning that even Maud turned a somewhat surprised and curious look from one to the other.

But if May were inwardly troubled by the

abrupt question, Harry Percy must have been disappointed if he expected any outward indication of embarrassment ; for although there was a brighter glow upon her pale cheek, she turned her open, ingenuous countenance full upon him, and said in a clear, steady voice :

“ I *do* love him, and who could not, for is he not truly noble—truly excellent ? Yes,” she repeated “ *truly* good, there is no deception in *his* character ; we all know there are some,” and here her colour heightened and her soft eyes flashed “ who seem externally virtuous—charming, but in reality are false—deceitful—treacherous !”

“ And such you believe me to be !” he replied with a deep sigh, and a tone of such heartfelt despondency, that even May for a moment regretted the bitterness of her last speech, but in the next he had turned to her sister. She heard the whispered words—

“ And do you Maud think this of me ?” and May felt sure that the sigh and melan-

choly was assumed—other sound, he murmured in her sister's ear—they were too low to reach her own, but she saw the crimson hue spread over that sister's cheek, as she hastily averted her head.

The murmured words had been "Alas! in your hands rests my fate—whether my future life is to be virtuous; you might be my guardian—my redeeming angel!"

"Let us go to mamma, dear Maud," exclaimed May somewhat impatiently, "she has been a long time alone."

Maud rose slowly and followed her sister to her mother's sitting room, where they were soon joined by Harry Percy.

How little was that calm, sweet, suffering mother aware, as she joyfully welcomed the trio, what stormy emotions were tormenting each heart! She listened some time to the agreeable conversation of Percy, but her anxious eye soon observed something amiss in the countenance of Maud. She imagined

she could easily guess the cause of her depression and agitated looks, and she immediately proposed a ride, knowing the exhilarating effect of exercise on the spirits of her daughter.

“ You will have a full hour and a half, before the dressing bell rings dearest, and it will be quite light till then ; I am sure Harry will accompany you.”

Harry did not offer a great many objections, and rose to order the horses.

“ And May,” he said as he reached the door, “ you will ride too, will you not ?”

May had walked to the window and was apparently gazing on the landscape without.

“ Will you ride, dear child ? or will you stay and take a turn with me on the terrace ?” asked Mrs. Sutherland. For the first time in her life perhaps, when there was any question relating to the wishes of her mother, May hesitated. “ Oh I see she would like to ride, and it will do her good,” said Mrs. Sutherland.

But no ! May could not endure that her

mother should suppose for a moment that she could prefer any pleasure to that of being of use to her. She looked upon the pale cheek of that idolised parent, remembered that her father was absent, that if she left her, she would be alone, and replied without turning her head from the window :

“ No I shall not ride,” but there was a painful, doubting feeling within her heart, as she pronounced the words.

May, with her mother leaning on her arm, was strolling on the terrace, when Harry Percy and Maud, side-by-side slowly wended their way along the gravel approach, but how different were the thoughts of the parent and child, as they both gazed on the graceful figures of the equestrians till they disappeared from their sight !

“ A ride this beautiful evening will do Maud good,” said the former, “ especially with such a cheerful companion ; she looked pale and

out of spirits; but we cannot wonder at that, can we May?" she asked smiling.

May endeavoured to smile in return, but it was a forced, melancholy expression, she could not say she thought the ride would do her sister good. Alas, no!

And then she had to listen to her mother's conversation respecting Arthur and Maud, and it made her heart ache to think of the blow which must, sooner or later, fall on her unsuspecting, confiding mother--that day, on which the veil would be withdrawn -- that day which she now felt with grief was fast approaching.

A third person had watched the pair as they rode past her, and there was a meaning--an expression in her eyes as she looked after them, as if she had been well acquainted with the secrets of their hearts. Had it been in the days of witchcraft, no one would have hesitated in ranking old Judith amid the weird sisterhood of days gone by.

As Maud passed "Percy Castle" she had

turned her looks upwards towards the creeping vine, the foliage of which was already shooting forth. Did she think of the sweet and sour grapes? True she turned her head hastily away, but it was to avoid a very unpleasant apparition at one of the windows. From it peeped old Judith, her bleared eyes fixed on her with no very agreeable expression, and her harsh demoniacal laugh ringing gratingly on her ears, as Maud gave her horse a quick touch with the whip and galloped off.

It brought back vividly to her mind all the incidents of that September morning -- the circumstances which had called forth the same discordant sound, and she thought of the change which had been wrought in her heart since she heard it last.

Oh! that she had received that sound, unmusical as it was, as a threatening, warning power, calling her to turn from present danger, to seek again the paths of peace.

CHAPTER XXV.

" But anxious cares the pensive nymph oppress'd,
And secret passions laboured in her breast."

POPE.

Another—even now she loved another."

BYRON'S DREAM.

THREE weeks had elapsed — weeks which had been marked by only one apparent and important circumstance — the illness of Mrs. Sutherland, who had suffered from an alarming attack. The skilful, London physician

hastily summoned, pronounced the seizure when over, the crisis of her malady, which having happily passed away, tended rather towards favourable results than otherwise; and though it left the invalid weak and languid, to the utmost degree, still happy symptoms which for some time had disappeared, returned to gladden the hearts of those around her.

The physician departed, having recommended a change to the Continent, as the most effectual means towards her perfect recovery, and the ensuing month, the proposed plan was to be carried into execution.

But a day had now arrived which rejoiced the hearts of many at Sutherland Manor. Justly loved, no less by his equals than his inferiors, Arthur Balfour was about to return. He had been known and esteemed from infancy by the servants, and dependents of the family, and his father was also remembered with affection. Many were the significant smiles which passed from mouth to mouth. They shrewdly guessed

that he returned to claim as his bride, the beautiful heiress, their future mistress—she whom many of them had held in their arms when an infant—and had watched growing up from the lovely child to the beautiful woman. And he they thought was worthy of her, so young—so noble—so handsome! “Oh the beautiful couple they will make!” was the burden of every tongue, and visions of a wedding, such as was never equalled in the hymeneal annals, floated in the brains of all—from the inhabitants of the servants’ hall, to the more exalted territory under the government of Mrs. Power, who with indescribable pride and importance, opened the sacred receptacle containing the wedding veil, which for many generations had graced the brides of the house of Sutherland.

Maud had often horrified the old lady by hinting at the idea, of being the originator of a new and more modern style of head dress, for the future benefit of her descendants, and made

her ears tingle with the (to her) discordant sound of Brussels lace, as a substitute for the time-discoloured though splendid point of which the treasured heir-loom was fabricated. Mrs. Power prophesied that no marriage in the family could be prosperous, unless the precious relic bore its part in the ceremony. But where is now the destined bride? the subject of such anticipated happiness, on whom the thoughts of so many are centred — was she looking out with anxious, eager eyes for her expected lover? No, she was seated before a large looking-glass, having been attired with more than usual care and solicitude, by her abigail, in consideration of him, who that night, would gaze upon her beauteous lady.

One circumstance had greatly discomposed Lucy lately; it was that her young mistress had insisted upon wearing her hair simply braided, so that her chief delight and pride, the arrangement of the luxuriant, clustering ringlets was denied her; she had that evening

sighed after many a vain attempt to induce our heroine to reassume her original *coiffure*, which met with such severe rebuffs, that at last, in despair, Lucy had been silenced, and was forced to submit to smooth the envious curls, and endeavour to turn and twist them from their natural course. She supposed it was to gratify some fancy of the expected Captain, but she was puzzled, knowing from good authority the admiration those very ringlets had once excited. "But then," and Lucy shrugged her shoulders and raised her sentimental black eyes as she mused, "there is no accounting for the freaks and caprices of lovers." And another circumstance not a little mystified her—Miss Sutherland's spirits and temper had lately become very variable — her mother's illness and the Captain's prolonged absence, might perhaps have been the cause at one time, but now the former was so much improved in health that every heart rejoiced — and the latter in a few hours would again be by her side—

still the quick sighted waiting woman observed in her, none of the joyous excitement usual to one so situated as her mistress. During the course of her toilette, she was either plunged in a deep reverie, with her dark distended eyes fixed vacantly on the lovely face reflected in the mirror before her, whilst she turned again and again a diamond ring on her finger, answering in monosyllables, or by impatient gestures, any question or remark ventured by Lucy, or in a state of nervous agitation, starting and turning pale at every sound that met her ear.

However the toilette was at last completed and Lucy had nothing left to do, but to cast an approving glance at her own handy work, and she was forced though unwillingly to admit, that certainly the braided hair displayed to perfection the beautiful contour of that faultless face. She did wish that the bright colour which now only came

at fits and starts to her cheeks, would remain there undisturbed as it used to do.

“But perhaps,” thought Lucy, who in her way was full of romance and sentiment, “perhaps, considering her circumstances, the delicate lily whiteness is, after all, the most proper and interesting.”

But the beautiful rose, which freshly plucked stood on the dressing table, and on which she had cast many a wistful glance during the progress of the toilette—how it would improve the *tout ensemble!* and though not without fear and trembling, she removed it from the water, and with the skill of a finished *artiste*, held it in a becoming position on the side of Maud's head, begging her just to look and observe the effect.

One glance was given — an angry and impatient gesture, and then in a tone of command which admitted of no resistance on the part of the waiting woman, she desired her to leave the room, and Lucy with a good humoured shrug departed, for she loved her young lady

too well to be angry at her occasional caprice and temper.

When Lucy had left the room, Maud remained seated as before. The only movement she made, was to place her elbow on the table, and lean her forehead on her hand. She did not perceive that her sister had entered from an adjoining apartment, and had stood for some time, anxiously gazing on her ; till happening to raise her eyes towards the looking-glass, she there beheld reflected the slight figure of May. The anxious scrutiny of the latter was then exchanged for an affectionate smile, and kissing her cheek May exclaimed :

“ My beautiful Maud must not sit looking so sad and thoughtful, when with smiles and joy she ought to be waiting to welcome her gallant soldier. Come, and let Arthur (as no doubt did our ancestors of old) find his ladye love in the old hall, with all those ancestors looking down upon her, waiting to receive her *preux chevalier*. I will be your attendant

damsel, and witness your happy meeting—Come ! But first let me place in your hair this beautiful rose, your own emblem — Arthur's rose too, for you planted it together on a certain happy evening." And May attempted to fix it, as Lucy had done, in the bright hair, but though she received not the same repulse, still there was an impatient wave off with the hand whilst she said :

" Do not tease me May, I am ill."

" Ill ! oh, nonsense ! but never mind—in an hour's time you will be quite well again, for Arthur will be here !"

And again she made the attempt to place the rose, and this time she seemed to have succeeded, for she received no check to her endeavours, and when she had arranged it to her satisfaction she exclaimed :

" Now see how beautiful you look !"

Hardly had the words passed May's lips, than Maud sprang hastily from her seat, and in

another instant the flower was torn from its resting place and lay at May's feet.

The gentle girl started and looked pale, nor was she restored to composure by the words that followed, for with eyes vividly flashing and her voice trembling with emotion, Maud exclaimed :

"It shall not, it must not be there!—May!" she continued in a lower tone, and fixing a steady gaze on her sister, "May, do you know that *he* — that Arthur, begged me to let him see that rose in my hair on his return, as a token that I loved him still — as a sign that I was not changed — that my heart remained as once it was — his own — and would you have me raise false hopes — would you have me *deceive* him ?

"Deceive him !" exclaimed May in faltering accents.

"Yes, deceive him !" replied Maud, "for May I *am* changed—I love him not," and again she sank upon the chair, and heaved a

deep, long drawn sigh, as if in a degree relieved of the heavy burden, which pressed upon her aching heart.

And May fell upon her knees, and burying her face in her sister's lap, murmured in a voice broken by convulsive sobs :

“ Poor — poor Arthur ! ” A pause then ensued which lasted for some minutes. May was the first to interrupt the painful silence. She raised her face, down which the tears were trickling fast, and with a look of earnest supplication, exclaimed in a stifled—agitated voice, “ Oh, Maud ! unsay those cruel — dreadful words ; they are not true — oh ! say they are not true ! ”

“ I cannot May, for then I should speak falsely ! ” was the reply.

“ And he will return,” continued May in agonised grief, “ he will return full of joy and hope—and you will tell him—tell him that you do not love him !—and my father—my mother what will be their disappointment--their sorrow ? ”

I cannot help it May—I cannot force myself to love—besides *I* have been deceived. Why was I not told it was a settled matter, that we were to become attached—that he was invited here for the express purpose—that since children we have been destined for one another—why was I not informed of all this—why have I been treated like a child? And you are mistaken May,” she continued, “if you imagine that my rejection, will inflict so serious a wound—no doubt it will cause him to pang at first, that he has lost the heiress, whom he had reasoned and schooled himself into loving, as much as one *so all perfect*, could love a being so *imperfect* as myself. He will grieve perchance to relinquish the honour and glory of subduing my pride and self-will—in short of enacting the part of a second Petruchio in the taming of the shrew. Oh! I have long seen, and indeed *heard* what he thinks of me—so dear May do not distress yourself so very much

—we shall soon find some means of consoling him.”

It was now May's tearful eyes that flashed, and her cheeks that glowed, as starting to her feet she exclaimed :

“ Maud you are cruel — most cruel ! and shamefully do you wrong one, who loves you with equal disinterestedness as fervour ; but I know who it is that has thus poisoned your mind—who has crept like a venomous serpent into your heart, and has deceived you ! and you my sister, have listened to his honied, but dangerous words ; and it is one who has been received with kindness, and confidence, beneath our father's roof, and reaped benefits from him—who professes such love for my mother—such brotherly affection for ourselves—it is *he* who has treacherously — wickedly robbed Arthur of your heart—who has poisoned your mind with infamous fabrications, and made you think thus coldly — unkindly, of a being so superior—it is—it is—.”

May stopped abruptly when about to pronounce the name, which was quivering on her lips, for her indignation was turned almost to terror, by the violent agitation exhibited by her sister. The colour which, at the beginning of her speech, had rested impatiently on the cheeks and temples of Maud, now vanished entirely, leaving her pale as death; her whole frame trembled fearfully; she cowered beneath May's concluding words and hid her face with her hands, as if dreading some fearful shock.

May reproached herself, for having called forth such painful feelings, and with fresh anguish she beheld in her sister's agitation, the confirmation of her worst fears. She attempted to throw her arms round her neck saying, "Forgive me dearest—forgive me!" but Maud repulsed her, exclaiming:

"No! leave me—leave me!—you know all—go proclaim it if you please—but I will not endure reproach—nor will I hear *him* blamed—abused—let no one presume to speak evil of

him in my presence.—It is enough, I love him !” and she raised her head haughtily, and with an air of firm decision waved May from her. But May heeded her not ; she stood motionless, as if she were petrified !

“ My father—my mother !” she at length found words to murmur, “ oh, what will they feel when they hear this ? do you not remember on the first night of his arrival what they said respecting him—how fearfully they spoke of his character, and of the misery that must inevitably devolve on the unfortunate woman who loved him—could you then, knowing their sentiments on the subject—.”

“ Hush---hush ! I command you May ! you talk indeed the language of one who has never loved ; and” she continued lowering her voice, and fixing an earnest steadfast gaze on her sister, “ you know not what it is to be loved by HARRY PERCY !”

May again covered her eyes with her hands and shuddered violently.

“ No !” she murmured, “ thank God I do not ; or rather, would that I had been the object of that love, to save you Maud, from its influence. I hope---I feel that I should have had strength to overcome the feeling, if not for my own sake, for that of those to whom we owe so much affection --- such gratitude ! for you well know what wretchedness will be their portion, when the secret of such a love is revealed to them. Maud, you reverence your parents. Oh ! for their dear sakes tear from your heart this unworthy passion.”

Maud with indignant looks would fain have interrupted her sister, but May fearlessly continued, “ Yes, unworthy I call it, Maud---though you spurn me for thus saying---has this love not made you guilty of treachery towards another ? --- ah, think how your parents adore you---you, their first-born---their loveliest---their dearest !---our sweet mother, how she dotes upon you, and rejoices in the happy prospect she thinks in store for you---her eyes

brighten when she speaks of Arthur and her child, and pictures to herself the joyful future!—and will you Maud, dash all this happiness to the ground, and tell her that you love *one*, of whom it is impossible she can approve. Has he not wasted the best of God's gifts, given to him to be used to His glory—robbed honest men of their due—and the poor of support, by sinfully squandering his fortune—by the devastating sin of gambling and extravagance? He is wholly incapable of sacrificing any wrongful desire, or selfish gratification, for the sake of others—no one principle of right does he possess.”

“ May, I will hear no more of this; you are unlike yourself—prejudiced—unjust!— you know not Harry as well as I do !”

But May was not to be thus silenced.

“ One word yet ! but I will say no more of *him*. It was not of him Maud I would now speak, it was of my mother!—oh for her precious sake” and here the poor girl's voice faltered,

and her lips quivered with strong emotion, "for her sake you will surely try to conquer this dreadful love—think how ill she has been—and alas Maud, the miserable, agonising thought, has lately, often flashed across my mind, that she may not long be with us; indeed she sometimes talks to me so solemnly, with such touching eloquence, as if her mind were impressed with the same sad feeling, yet she fears to grieve us; this may be but a torturing fancy, but still---still, should that time ever arrive---and we are left---."

"But that time will never come for me," cried the impetuous Maud, in a passionate, agitated voice, "to me love, or hate, would then avail nought---I should care for neither, for if my mother died, I should die also!"

"Oh Maud, speak not so rashly --- our lives are not in our own hands," cried May, "and that is not the way to shew our affection for *her*. If she died," and May lifted her tearful eyes to Heaven, "we could neither add,

nor take aught from her felicity ; she would then we humbly trust be in Heaven, in the presence of her Saviour---in joy unspeakable---inconceivable ! It is now whilst she is here, that alone it is in our power to add to her happiness, to save her from many pangs---what sacrifice is it possible for us to make, too great for such a mother---one whose sole desire since the hour of our birth, has been to save us from a moment's pain---who would gladly yield up her very life for us."

May paused too much overpowered by her excitement, to find words to proceed, but she fixed an earnest, supplicating glance on her sister, which spoke all she would have said.

Maud was softened---affected ! for the first time during the conversation, tears forced their way down her cheeks. There was a pause, but at length in a sorrowful tone she said :

" May, I am not like you---not as good as you. It is easy for you to sacrifice your own will and inclination for the sake of others---but

I have never done so, and therefore find it no easy task. I sometimes think, that even were I to marry Arthur, I could never make him really happy. He is good---excellent!--my self-will, would only make him wretched—he would either despise me, or seek to curb my temper, and tutor me, and that I could not endure—if you knew how galling it is to me to have my will opposed! Now you are so amiable, so gentle, yet so sensible—yes dear May,” she continued rapidly, and a half smile curled her beautiful lip, “you would suit Arthur so well, you were made for him, and how happy you would be together! Oh! depend upon it he would soon recover the pang my rejection might cause him, and learn to love you—nay not learn, for already he considers you *perfection*, and he would come at last and thank me for the felicity, my faithlessness had procured him.”

“Maud, Maud!” cried May, hiding her blushing face, “you must not, shall not, talk

in this wild, thoughtless strain ; Arthur is far too valuable to be thus cast off, and you wrong yourself and him by thinking that he does not prize you sufficiently. If you only knew how he loved you, you would be convinced, that he would rather possess you with all your faults—and you *are* a naughty spoilt child,” she added, smiling through her tears, “ than the most perfect of human beings.”

Maud again shook her head.

“ May,” she said, “ knowing as you do the state of my heart—knowing—for there is no longer any use in concealing it from you—that I love *another*—would you have me bestow on Arthur a hand without a heart, or would he not spurn from him a heart so false and treacherous ? for you would not have me deceive him ; and besides” and she covered her burning face with her hands, “ he—he—Harry Percy alas ! must know that I love *him*. Arthur I am sure suspected this—he could not have done otherwise. He will ask if my heart be

truly---wholly his ! Can I say it is ? Can I with those eyes of Harry's fixed on me---and while I hear that voice---that thrilling voice ?”

“ You need not hear it Maud --- dearest Maud,” replied May caressingly, “ it cannot be love you feel for him, it is infatuation---fascination---tell him to go from hence, or, if you have not strength or courage, I will do it for you---tell him that you have resolved to break the spell which bound you for a short space---tell him that duty---honour, points to such a course---that if his love for you---his friendship for my parents, is sincere, he will leave you---yes, tell him all, and if he still retains a spark of anything like upright and honorable sentiments, he will instantly depart.”

“ But Arthur !”

“ Tell him *all*---tell him that your imagination had been excited---your affections for a while decoyed from him---that you are still writhing under the effects of the subtle delusion---but that if he loves you sufficiently to

wait---time may restore it to what it once was."

"And then ask him to return," interrupted Maud impatiently---"stoop to entreat him to receive my love again?---no---never---never!"

"No, tell him the truth---bid him return no more---and then see whether he will obey---oh try him," and May smiled through her tears, for hope was reviving her heart.

At this moment she heard her father's voice calling her.

"I am coming Papa," she cried; and hastily, and with trembling hands she fastened the rose in her sister's hair; and having affectionately kissed her, removed the traces of tears from her own fair cheeks, and ran off, for her father again called her, desiring her to go to her mother.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Does she love the boy who kneeling,
Brings to her his youth,
With its passionate deep feeling,
With its hope, its truth?
No! his hour has passed away!
He has had his day!"

L. E. L.

AND Maud arose from her chair, and with slow and lingering steps, sought the drawing room.

As she entered, at the first glance it appeared to be unoccupied by any one, but in the next moment, from the recess of a deep bay window, Harry Percy appeared.

He advanced to meet her and took her hand. She strove to withdraw it, but he held it fast in his, whilst her eyes sunk beneath the earnest penetrating gaze he fixed upon her.

“Have I then no hope?” he murmured in a low musical tone, “is my doom fixed for ever?”

A pause—no answer came, and with a passionate gesture, Harry Percy loosened his grasp of the hand he so firmly pressed, and retreated from her side. With a beating heart and trembling steps, Maud approached the window, and leant for support against one of the marble tables, which stood in the recess, her eyes seemingly riveted on the brilliant sky, on which the setting sun was darting its departing rays.

But she marked not its marvellous splendour—she saw nothing—she *felt* alone that the gaze of Harry Percy was on her, as he stood by the mantel-piece, his head resting on his hand.

Poor May—what availed her words of coun-

sel, or reproof—they were as little heeded now as the sky that was gleaming on the infatuated girl—their influence was dying away in her heart, as quickly as the brightly tinged clouds were fading into dim obscurity, in the distant horizon.

The sound of carriage wheels was now heard ; nearer and nearer it came—paler and paler grew the cheek of Maud—how painfully heaved her heart !—more fixed, more earnest became the gaze of Harry Percy !

“ Come Maud, come !” cried the cheerful voice of her father, “ let us go together to welcome Arthur !” and when with faltering steps she advanced to meet him, Mr. Sutherland with a happy smile drew her arm within his and led her into the hall.

The wheels were now distinctly heard grinding through the gravel approach, and in another instant the horses’ feet rattled on the paved causeway, and the carriage stopped—the steps were let down, with more than ordinary haste and

eagerness, and Arthur Balfour, with hope and joy beaming on his countenance, sprung out, followed more leisurely by another—it was Lord Percival. Balfour scarcely waited to shake Mr. Sutherland by the hand, for catching a glimpse of Maud who stood motionless in the hall, as if rooted to the spot, he was by her side in an instant.

The servants were busily employed in unpacking the carriage, and Lord Percival, knowing that at such a moment, his presence was not required, with a passing bow to Maud went on to the drawing-room, where he found Harry Percy.

And Arthur! he was by the side of the beloved one—her hand was in his—his eyes were fixed with a look of—oh! what intense, thrilling enquiry on her face, where a vivid flush was usurping the place of his former paleness, but though her lips moved, no word, no sound of welcome issued from them.

“Maud,” he exclaimed, and a joyful smile

passed over his countenance, for he beheld the rose.

“A cold meeting,” exclaimed Mr. Sutherland, who had viewed it from a distance, “a cold meeting for cousins and for lovers,” and in an instant Maud felt herself in Arthur’s arms, pressed to his heart—her lips to his!

Did he mark how cold were those lips---how she trembled in his embrace---how constrained was her demeanour?---Where was the happy look---the blushing smile---the kind voice of love that should have greeted him? Echo might well have answered in mournful accents,

“Where! oh where!”

The servants now entered from the portico, and Harry Percy and Lord Percival appeared from the drawing-room. The former apologised for his uninvited arrival, explained that he was on his way further northwards, and that travelling from town with Balfour, he could

not resist the pleasure of passing a night at the Manor.

Mr. Sutherland, after expressing his sincere pleasure at seeing him, laughingly begged that both gentlemen would have compassion upon hungry souls, and lose no time in dressing---the dinner hour having already passed. Arthur Balfour however, managed to have a few words of affectionate welcome from Mrs. Sutherland, and he was beginning to make many anxious enquiries after her health, when Mr. Sutherland, guessing where he was, entered the dressing-room and hurried him off to perform the duties of the toilette.

In crossing the gallery on his way to his room, he encountered May.

"Why did you not come to welcome me?" he said, after the first greeting was over.

"You did not want me," she replied, but it was not with her usual cheerful smile.

"How have you gone on during my absence?" he said hastily, not able to conceal a

certain anxiety for her answer, the remembrance of their former conversation flashing across his mind.

But before she could even reply to his question, Lord Percival appeared, and Arthur, startled at seeing him already dressed for dinner, was obliged to run off without waiting for any further information.

"Miss Sutherland," said Lord Percival as they walked together towards the drawing-room, "I almost feared that considering existing circumstances I might be *de trop* here, but Balfour assured me that such would not be the case, and I was too happy to believe it." He seemed to wish May to speak and she answered,

"I am sure Lord Percival we are all delighted to see so valued a friend of Arthur's."

But her words did not seem to satisfy the young man, and there was an expression of mortified disappointment on his countenance, which might have surprised her, had she

observed it, but her thoughts were otherwise occupied, and she heeded her handsome and titled companion, as little, as if he had been the most insignificant and least prepossessing of men.

The party were at last all assembled in the drawing-room; but it was considerably past eight o'clock, when they sat down to dinner. When it was announced, Mr. Sutherland, too hungry to stand upon etiquette, seized Mr. Merton's arm and preceded the party, much to the amusement of the rest. Arthur drew Maud's arm within his, and followed. Lord Percival took May, and Harry Percy brought up the rear.

"Were is my other rose?" asked Arthur with a smile, as he pressed the arm that rested on his.

"It was blighted," was the answer, in a careless tone, and at the same moment, (was it owing to the unskilfulness of May's pretty fingers, or was it an omen?) the rose which

decked Maud's hair fell at their feet, and she crushed it unconsciously with her foot as she passed !

Arthur would have stopped to raise it from the ground, but she hurried on.

May saw it, looked down upon it, and half paused, as if she fain would save the neglected flower. Lord Percival smiling, said :

“ I would pick it up for you Miss Sutherland, if I thought a cast-away, withered rose, worthy of your acceptance.”

But it seemed that the broken, fallen flower was not despised by all, for at the dinner-table it decked the button-hole of Harry Percy. This was apparently a trifling, insignificant occurrence, but to one who was looking on, it seemed “ big with import.”

“ And how did the dinner proceed ? With so many adverse passions, contending in the hearts of some of the company, could it be a social, cheerful repast ? Into the secrets of the heart it is not necessary to

dive, but to outward appearance all was gay ; at any rate bright, sparkling ! How joyous looked the brilliantly lighted room---the table with its glittering silver---the well-served dinner, surrounded by a party, among which there was not one to spoil the effect of the *tout ensemble*—not one being, on which the eye could rest without admiration or satisfaction.

There was the father, still in the prime of life, with his noble, handsome face, on which the cares of the world as yet had left no trace, whose dark hair, there mingled scarcely a shade of grey, and whose countenance beamed with happiness, as he gazed on those around him.

On the right hand of Mr. Sutherland sat Mr. Merton. Unlike his host, he poor man ! had many a furrow on his brow, imprinted by grief much more than time. He was a widower and childless, and though he had not yet reached the age of sixty years, his hair was silvery white ; his forehead wrinkled, but the

benevolent nature of his heart lighted up his countenance, and shone forth in the mild benignant smile with which he contemplated the joys of others. The remembrance of his own deep sorrows did not prevent him from "rejoicing with those" who rejoice, though to weep with the miserable was perhaps more accordant with his saddened heart. It is not in the gay and joyous scenes of life, that such good men especially shine, but in dark and troubled hours, in moments of affliction and suffering, and in such scenes we may again meet him. By his side, forming a striking contrast, sat the young soldier, the very emblem of manly beauty. He was perhaps the most silent of the group; he seemed to have no eyes but for the loved one by whom he sat.

Then there was Lord Percival, all gaiety, and vivacity, especially when he could win a smile from his pretty neighbour May—but at first, to his sprightly sallies, and animated questions, he had gained only inappropriate, and

abrupt answers ; her eyes were anxiously turned towards others of the party. All however seemed to be going on so prosperously, that she caught the spirit of the company and chatted gaily with the handsome young nobleman.

And Harry Percy ? Unlike Arthur he had eyes—ears—words for all ! Never had his spirits appeared so elevated—his conversation so brilliant and amusing—his manners so fascinating—so charming ! Even Mr. Merton listened with pleased admiration whilst he so eloquently talked, and forgot, in the pleasure of the moment, that such plausible sentiments and opinions, proceeded from the mouth of one of the very class, which should especially come under the influence of his charitable censure.

In her mother's place, between Harry Percy and Arthur Balfour, sat our heroine—how changed since the moments of previous agitation, when the upbraidings of conscience were

contending with the passionate emotions which strove for mastery in her young heart. Bright was now the glow upon her cheek—the flash of her eyes—the smile upon her curling lip--- how carelessly gay the tone in which---

“ Arrow-like light words flashed from her tongue.”

the ringing laugh which ever and anon burst from her rosy mouth. Who could have dreamt that all was but---

“ The mask and mantle many wear from pride.”

Even May looked and wondered, and her spirits and hopes began to rise. Could her sister thus dissemble---could she be thus, if she meditated so soon destroying the happiness of so many dear to her ?

The father was also made happy by noting the glad looks of his child---for even he had marvelled at symptoms in his daughter, which had of late almost startled him ; they

had evidently been caused by her lover's absence---all would now be right.

Lord Percival rejoiced for his friend Balfour; and Harry Percy with his penetrating eye---his experience --- his deep discernment --- his fancied knowledge " of the secret of the prison house," of which he held the key---even he was astonished, true it is---

" That for a cloak, what is there that can be
So difficult to pierce as gaiety ?
The careless smile, like a bright banner borne ;
The laugh-like merriment, the lip of scorn ! -
Too dazzling to be scanned, the gloomy
Seems to hide something it would not avow,
But mocking words, light words and ready jest,
These are the bars, the curtains to the breast."

And thus it was with Maud Sutherland during the whole of that evening.

Mrs. Sutherland who was not able to sit out a long dinner, was reclining on a sofa in the drawing-room when the sisters entered it. Maud seated herself by her mother's side, and Mrs. Sutherland taking her hand, said with a

smile and in a tone of tenderness, which must have sent a pang to her child's heart,

“ My own darling, tell me, are you very *very* happy ?”

In a hurried manner, averting her head, she answered :

“ I shall be so to-morrow---if—if—Mamma—you—will—promise—to—.”

“ Promise what, dearest ?”

“ To be kind Mamma—indulgent as you ever have been——*whatever* may happen.”

There was a look of surprise in the mother's face, as she tenderly kissed her idolized child, and May turned an anxious glance towards them both, then suddenly rose.

The gentlemen at that moment appeared. Music soon began. Song after song burst forth from the lips of Maud, with wild thrilling melody. How often in after years, did those sounds—that voice of plaintive sweetness, return with painful remembrance to the hearts of those who listened to her——how often in

the twilight gloom, that season of saddened meditation—and in the wakeful—feverish hours of a sleepless night, did the thoughts of some of that assembled party, fly back to the remembrance of that evening—that bright, sparkling evening.

The good clergyman as he sat by Mrs. Sutherland's side, and watched the movements of the beautiful girl, with a sigh breathed an inward fervent prayer, that the favoured child of prosperity, might not be led by the glare of earthly happiness, to forget those better things—those more enduring blessings, which the world can neither give nor take away, and as he pressed her hand, in bidding her good night, he murmured in a low tone of affectionate earnestness.

“ God bless you my dear young lady, and may *He* shower upon you, with every earthly blessing, His *best gifts*.

“ Now one more song, and then we must away to bed,” said Mr. Sutherland.

“ Well ! shall it be a chorus ? ” asked Maud.

“ Oh no ! let me hear your voice alone,” whispered Arthur Balfour as he leant over her ; and he seated himself by her side, while she sang to a light gay air, with spirit and expression, the following words—

“ Oh breathe not of Love,
Oh breathe not to me,
If constant for aye,
Your love motto must be :
Where are the things,
The fairest on earth ?
Is it not in their change
That their beauty has birth ?
Would they be lovely,
As all of them are,
But for the chance
And change that are there ?
Breathe no love to me,
I will give none of mine ;
Love must light in an instant,
As quickly decline.
His blushes, his sighs
Are bewildering things,
Then away with his fetters
And give me his wings.”

One glance at Arthur, one graceful wave of the hand, and she was gone, but the words--

“ Oh breath not of love, oh breathe not to me.”

were heard ringing through the galleries as she hastily passed to her room.

CHAPTER XXVII.

" I have strain'd the spider's thread,
'Gainst the promise of a maid :
I have weigh'd a grain of sand
'Gainst her plight of heart and hand."

W. SCOTT.

Arthur Balfour well knew where Maud was to be found, when with a beating heart and eager steps, he sought her, that he might hear at last from her own lips his doom—he felt that the moment had arrived, which would decide his future fate, and render him either

the happiest of mortals, or the most miserable being on the face of the earth.

It was in the conservatory, the scene of a former *tête-à-tête*, that he sought, and found, the object of his devotion. Passionately fond of flowers, she frequently repaired to this favorite spot, to inspect her cherished plants and exotics, and immediately after leaving the luncheon table on the day succeeding his arrival, she had, as Arthur imagined, adjourned to this beautiful temple, well deserving of being dedicated to the goddess of flowers. Arthur's appearance did not surprise her; she had quite expected him, and with calm dignity, which in a better cause, must have been deemed admirable, turned to meet him.

During a feverish night, and a morning spent in deep meditation, she had, though not without feelings of remorse, contrived to nerve her mind to the full determination, of casting away every particle of weak pity, as unworthy of one, whose will was free—whose heart was

her own, to bestow, or take away—whose love would not — could not be restrained, or controlled — over which even her parents' wishes, or commands could have no power.

“ I will tell them that I *cannot* love him,” she repeated again and again to herself, “ no doubt it will grieve them, but they will soon see the utter impossibility, of my *trying* to fulfil the tacit engagement which exists between us, and they will cease to desire me to wed one under such circumstances — and then---.”

But it is needless to trace the arguments by which the infatuated girl endeavoured to stifle the struggles, the reproaches of that inward spirit, which in vain warned her to pause and beware---those admonitory pangs of conscience which at one time had so moved --- so tortured her ! Her better genius seemed to have deserted her, and she was left under the dominion of that deadly

foe, her own self-will, her own unsubdued, rebellious heart !

She listened to Arthur Balfour with calm attention, with dignified graciousness ; she withdrew not the hand so tenderly --- so nervously pressed in his, whilst with all the eloquence of his true, noble soul, he poured forth the full expression of the devotion he had before confessed, and which she had once blessed him by accepting, and returning. He had now come he said, sanctioned by her parents, to claim the boon for which he had so long waited---which had been his hope ---his life ! for many a weary day ; he had come to supplicate her hand. Still---still she withdrew it not, she even returned the pressure as it rested in his, and smiled---yes she smiled, and Arthur thought his happiness was ensured for ever, and with joy uncontrollable he clasped her in his arms, and again breathed forth his joy and adoration. Maud

struggled to disengage herself from the warm embrace.

“Then you believe,” he replied with enthusiasm, “that I love you---I worship---.”

“Yes Arthur,” she exclaimed, “you do---you shall love me---*as a sister*, and I will love you as a beloved brother. Nay, stop—hear me—you never had a sister, nor I a brother—and ignorant of the affection which that relationship produces—and having nothing better at the moment to occupy our minds,” and again she smiled, though her cheek and lips grew pale, and her manner confused. Arthur offered no interruption and she continued, “Drawn together by past associations of our happy childhood, when we were indeed like brother and sister, we foolishly chose to fancy ourselves in love—I was indeed most blameable, and blush with shame when I remember my conduct. But I have been the first to awake from my dream. You must have observed, that I have been most unhappy

of late—I felt that I had as it were, drawn you into the snare, and that you had worked up your imagination to believe you really loved me—I knew that the awaking from the delusion would be painful—Is it not therefore more kind in me to at once arouse you from it, than to allow you, when too late---when bound by irrevocable ties, to discover how much you had been mistaken in your estimate of our mutual attachment. I ought to have said this much sooner, both for your sake, and that of my parents, who by my folly---my cowardice may also have been deceived. Dear Arthur forgive me !”

More earnestly might she have craved forgiveness could she adequately have imagined the despair---the agony, with which her cold words had struck upon the heart of her listener, freezing the warm hopes which a moment before beamed so gladly in his heart ; and the proud girl might have even trembled had she gazed on his countenance, after the

first stunning sensation had subsided. Could it be Arthur?

Truly he could scarcely be recognised as he now stood, his cheek, before so pale, flushed to the deepest crimson, his lips, from which soft words of love, had tremulously proceeded, tightly compressed, his eyes sparkling with indignation. He felt he had been wronged—grievously wronged, humiliated, by her who so calmly, coldly inflicted the bitter pang, and this thought called forth all his pride, and anger now was his predominant sentiment. His manner of replying to her was unexpected by the proud girl. He knelt not, he prayed not for a remission of his sentence, he dropped the hand, for which a few moments before, he had so eloquently sued, which he had so tenderly pressed, he fixed his reproachful eyes, full upon her face, and in a voice struggling with deep emotion, said :

“Forgive you Maud ! You have destroyed my hopes—the happiness of my future life

—you have trifled with my feelings, cruelly, most cruelly treated me. Mine is not a brother's love—tell me, and I have a right to ask the question, can you say with truth,” and his gaze was like that of the basilisk, “can you Maud sincerely declare, that it was the discovery of your *sisterly* affection for me, which alone has influenced your cruel conduct, or was it rather that you have suffered another, treacherously—dishonourably to rob me of that love which once—once your own lips confessed you felt for me !”

For an instant her cheek blanched and she quailed beneath the words and glance of Arthur, but she soon recovered, and proudly exclaimed :

“ I acknowledge not your boasted right to question me in this strain, nor will I reply—enough that I love you not—if you reject the sisterly affection I bear you, I can offer you no other,” and she drew from her finger the diamond ring, the token of their plighted love,

and held it towards him. But Arthur turned from it with a shudder, and falling from her hand the little trinket rolled on the ground, and there lay glittering in a corner.

“ You are right,” continued Arthur, “ it is not you Maud, that I should call to account for this perfidy, but the author of the misery I am now enduring, and he—” and his eyes flashed fire, “ he, the traitor ! must answer to me for the grievous wrong he has done me. Farewell ! the blow has been too hard to bear—I am not fit to remain in your presence,” and he turned to depart.

“ Stay Arthur, on your peril leave me not ; remain I command you,” Maud exclaimed, her pride and composure at once vanishing, and her cheek turning pale as death, “ what are you about to do ?”

He turned again sadly towards her, and paused for one instant, whilst with distended eyes she gazed upon him.

“ Tell me then Maud, or I must ask him the question, do you love Harry Percy ?”

“ Leave me—leave me—how dare you insult me ! Is this your love ?” she cried, her eyes appearing larger and larger, and passionate emotion shaking her light frame, “ what matters it to you who I love ?—but presume not to make use of my name to justify your impotent rage—you mad jealousy !—would you threaten me—terrify me into loving you—but it will not avail !”

Her manner became more agitated, the tones of her voice lower, for the crumbling noise of footsteps on the gravel, of the walk of the little flower garden, which led to the conservatory, sent the life blood rushing to her heart. The sound gradually increased until it appeared to the trembling Maud, to have approached quite close to her ; but suddenly for a moment it ceased entirely, and then more subdued than before, was heard by her quick ear, retreating and dying away.

Arthur heeded it not, his mind was too painfully occupied with inward thoughts, to observe any outward occurrence.

But doubtless this interruption had the effect of bringing to a more speedy close, this most distressing interview. We will not dwell on the painful conclusion, the expressions of mingled reproach and grief, indignation and relenting and lingering tenderness, which passed during that bitter scene : suffice it to say, that like all events in this world, whether pleasurable or painful, it had its end, and Arthur Balfour with a face of anguish, and a step, how different from that of joyous hope, with which he had entered the conservatory, departed from the presence of her whom he had so fondly loved, and who had so cruelly deceived him ; and Maud with a pang of remorse, she could not stifle, sunk on a low seat, covered her face with her hands, and sobbed passionately and violently.

Lord Percival was standing in the hall,

giving some orders to his servant regarding his departure, which to take place almost immediately, his travelling carriage being already at the door, though the post horses had not yet been put to, when Arthur passing by, accosted him :

“ Percival, if you will only wait half an hour, I will accompany you as far as C——.”

“ You will ? I shall be delighted to take you with me,” exclaimed Percival ; but his countenance changed, when he looked up and beheld that of his friend. As if in answer to the enquiring look Arthur saw depicted in his cousin’s face, he hastily said :

“ I have business at C——, and shall be quite ready in half an hour ; I have something to say first to Mr. Sutherland.”

And he passed on, and meeting his servant in the gallery, desired him immediately to prepare his portmanteau.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ Oh ! farewell then
The faithless dream, the sweet yet faithless dream,
That Miriam loves me.”

MILMAN.

MRS. SUTHERLAND and May had repaired to the library, the former having a letter to dictate : they were soon joined by Mr. Sutherland.

“ Have you seen this paragraph ?” said the

latter putting his finger on the part indicated, as he handed to her the Morning Post.

May read as follows :

“ Marriage in high life.—Captain Arthur Balfour of the Grenadier Guards, left town yesterday for Sutherland Manor, the seat of Mark Sutherland Esq., in Cumberland ; the preliminaries of Marriage, being about to be arranged between this gentleman and the beautiful and highly accomplished Miss Sutherland, one of the most richly endowed heiresses in the kingdom. Captain Balfour’s father, first cousin to Mr. Sutherland, changed his name to that of Balfour, on marrying Lady Charlotte Balfour, only daughter of the Earl of Balfour, and half sister to the present Earl. The gallant Captain is in his twenty-fourth year, and the young lady has not attained her nineteenth birth day. This marriage appears to give universal satisfaction to the families of both parties.”

“ I had hoped the affair had not been so

public," said Mr. Sutherland looking rather grave, "but it is impossible to avoid such reports getting abroad, whatever one may do. I prevented Percival reading it aloud at breakfast this morning, and Maud and Arthur were too pre-occupied to think of looking into a paper."

May made no remark as she returned the Morning Post to her father, but she looked very grave.

"I do not think," said Mrs. Sutherland, "that there can be any objection to the event being made public, nor do I see a possibility of the secret remaining one," she added with a smile, "for I really believe to judge from dear Arthur's face when he left us just now, that he has gone to claim that, which will give us no further right, or power, to keep the knowledge of the engagement concealed."

Mr. Sutherland did not reply, and he could hardly account for the annoyance which the paragraph had caused him. As he with agi-

tated steps paced up and down the room, he ever and anon cast impatient glances towards the door. Once he met the eye of May, as pausing in her occupation, she fixed her gaze on her father's face, and Mr. Sutherland beheld an answering feeling to his own, depicted on her countenance. He marked too how she glanced towards the door, and how her hand trembled when she re-commenced her writing.

There was none of this emotion visible in Mrs. Sutherland, as she reclined on the sofa, giving directions to May concerning the letter she was inditing ; she looked calm and happy, though perhaps her delicate cheek bore a more than usually vivid flush, and her large, dark eyes a brighter animation than they had done of late.

It was thus the trio were occupied, when the door opened, and Arthur with a countenance of almost livid paleness appeared before them. A deeper feeling of confusion and annoyance was added to his outraged heart, when he per-

ceived into whose presence he had entered. He had expected to find Mr. Sutherland alone, and the blood rushed from his heart to his very temples, when every eye turned upon him with an enquiring, anxious glance.

It is mortifying to the nature of man, to have the weaker—the softer emotions of his heart witnessed by a woman ; and under circumstances so humiliating, how doubly painful was it for poor Balfour to find himself in the presence of Mrs. Sutherland and her daughter—but he was too helplessly miserable to postpone the disclosure of his anguish.

He approached the mantel-piece, leant his elbow upon it, and said in a broken, husky voice, as he averted his face :

“ I am come to bid you adieu—I have promised to accompany Percival to C——.”

There was an interval of silence, the pen had fallen from May's hand—her heart seemed to stop its beating. Mr. Sutherland remained rooted to the spot where he had paused, on the

entrance of Arthur Balfour. Mrs. Sutherland was the first to break the silence; her sweet low voice began to speak in tones of surprise.

“To C——, Arthur? But you are not going to remain there——what can take you to C—— to-day? Has Maud” she continued with a smile, “has Maud given you leave?”

That kind, loved voice inflicted an additional pang on the young man's heart, but remembering the weak state of her health, it recalled him to the necessity of caution, and turning towards her his pallid face, in tones of forced calmness, and a smile—how melancholy! he answered:

“Yes, my dear aunt,” for by that title he always called her, “she has!”

He paused, stooped down, and kissed her forehead, then turning towards Mr. Sutherland, with a quivering lip he continued:

“We have all been very blind—very much in the dark—I ought not to have felt so secure. I, at least, should have been prepared for this blow!—but Maud” his voice trembled more

than ever when he pronounced her name—
“ Maud has just opened my eyes — has undeceived me, and as my presence cannot be very agreeable to her, after what has passed between us, I think it better that we should part—therefore—therefore—.”

He was stopped short in his sentence by a look from Mr. Sutherland, who said in a careless tone :

“ Well Arthur, it might be as well—I agree with you—you know you can return with me, for I have just received a letter which will oblige me to set off for C—— to attend the county sessions, and I may perhaps be detained there a day or two ; and by that time” he added with a forced smile, “ no doubt Miss Maud’s ill-humour will have passed away, and she will be ready to ask your pardon for her caprice.”

Arthur Balfour well knew the reason of this interruption and the light manner of Mr. Sutherland.

Mrs. Sutherland had not spoken, but the

colour had entirely forsaken her cheeks, and she now turned to her husband and said :

“ I think dear, I will go to my room,” and supported by him and followed by the weeping May, she departed, leaving Arthur leaning against the mantle-piece in an attitude of the deepest despondency.

Mr. Sutherland soon returned and drew from him the whole account of the disastrous affair.

With deep and grave concern he listened to the relation, and when Arthur ceased speaking, it was in quivering accents that he enquired of the young man, if he had any suspicion as to the cause of the estrangement of his daughter's heart.

After a pause Arthur answered in hollow tones :

“ I firmly believe, that her affections have been perfidiously stolen from me, by —by Mr. Percy.”

Had Mr. Sutherland suddenly encountered

the sting of a serpent, he could not have started back with greater horror—the colour flew to his temples—his eyes flashed !

Balfour averted his face, for it seemed as if the countenance of Maud was again before him.

A vague suspicion which had of late, at times, floated through the father's mind, like a dark shadow, now assumed a palpable form, and like a flash of lightning the whole truth stood revealed before him. He felt how blind—how madly secure he had been—and self-reproach almost superseded Mr. Sutherland's indignation towards him, who had so basely abused his confidence—so ungratefully repaid his kindness.

Agonising fears for the future happiness of his child, was for a moment his all-absorbing feeling.

A servant entered to say, that Lord Percival was waiting for Mr. Balfour.

“ Well Arthur,” said Mr. Sutherland, grasping the hand of the agitated young man, “ we

shall be both better able to talk over this matter when we next meet, which will be either to-night or to-morrow—in the meantime try to keep up your spirits, my dear fellow. I hope and trust that on investigating the matter, I shall find it not so hopeless as you seem to imagine.”

“ I am utterly hopeless,” said Arthur with a ghastly expression, “ but there is one part of the affair---.”

“ Arthur,” interrupted Mr. Sutherland, “ I know what you would say, but I rely too much upon your generous affection for Maud—for her family, to fear that you would, by any rash act, make her name conspicuous, and destroy for ever our domestic peace ! Arthur !” Mr. Sutherland again exclaimed, seeing by the countenance of Balfour, something which alarmed him, “ you love my wife—you see her state of weakness—her failing health---” and here the husband’s heart gave way, and the

firm man wept ! “ Would you add to her wretchedness ? ”

“ Never ! ” exclaimed Arthur, “ I would bear disgrace sooner — than---,” he could say no more, and a miserable pause ensued.

“ Rely on my not leaving this house, until every circumstance is sifted, and explained--- and now go Arthur---we unman each other--- and after all,” he added, endeavouring to assume a more cheerful tone, “ we may be making a very serious story out of a spoilt girl’s capricious whims.”

On crossing the hall to enter the carriage, Arthur Balfour’s name was pronounced by May, who had been sent by her mother, to beg that he would not leave the Manor without bidding her adieu. He followed his fair guide silently through the vestibule, having been first strictly enjoined by Mr. Sutherland to avoid all agitating topics.

But Mrs. Sutherland seemed to have no inclination to engage in any discussion on the

painful cause of his departure. She spoke merely a few faint words of tenderness, and when he murmured his hope of soon again beholding her, she answered not, but after enfolding him in a long fervent embrace, with an earnest voice, she invoked a blessing on his head ; no tear dimmed her eye—but she fixed a long, lingering look upon him as he turned to depart.

How often in after times, did that last look haunt his memory, and that last blessing fill his heart, with sweet but mournful remembrance !

And May, she threw her arms round Arthur's neck, and sobbed like a child on his bosom.

CHAPTER XXIX.

“ Did'st thou but know the inward touch of love,
Thou would'st as soon go kindle fire with snow,
As seek to quench the fire of love with words.”

SHAKESPEARE.

MR. SUTHERLAND watched the carriage, which was conveying Arthur away, roll down the avenue, and then with a heavy heart turned to seek his culprit daughter. But no culprit did that daughter feel herself to be. At that moment her heart was beating with sensations widely

different from those which filled the hearts of the rest of her family. Neither fear, nor uneasiness, nor even self-reproach, any longer troubled her ; she had avowed the love, the concealment of which had so long burdened her mind. She had received the ardent thanks of the man she loved, with infatuated tenderness—unshrinkingly she met the passionate gaze that beamed from those eyes, and listened to the full torrent of words which flowed from the eloquent tongue of her lover.

“ She was an angel—the angel, who was to transform — to purify him — henceforth to guide his steps through life, to virtue and happiness.”

Thus spoke Harry Percy, and Maud lent a willing, delighted ear, to the sweet, honied flattery, and forgot how little she resembled a pure angel ; she remembered not, that she had blasted the hopes of one, who loved her devotedly—that she was a deceiver—a betrayer of confiding affection, and that she was inflicting

the keenest pang of disappointment, on the best of parents.

To do Harry Percy justice, when he beheld the successful result of his four months' campaign—his schemes on the point of realization, he felt a pang of compunction, and also some misgivings, for he knew that there was still much to be done. He was fully aware of the estimate in which Mr. Sutherland held his character ; he was too shrewd a man of the world, not to understand his position, in the opinion of the upright, conscientious father. With his perfect horror of vice, would he give his idolized child, the heiress of his greatness, to a gambler, an almost utterly ruined man ? True, the will of that child had never yet been crossed—still !—

In cold blood had Harry Percy first engaged in this pursuit, but he had completely fallen into the snare which he had with such skill laid for the unsuspecting Maud. He was fairly—desperately in love with the captivating beauty—and now in this moment of triumph, a

flash of dormant good feeling, strong, though, alas, evanescent, made him feel how unworthy he was of possessing such a prize, and his heart sank. But when he poured forth to Maud in, energetic terms, his conviction, that he was undeserving of her, and even implored her to pause—to consider, ere she rashly consented to share the fortunes of a ruined man—to reflect whether she could endure or withstand the opposition of her friends, the censure of the world; when he unfolded to her the real state of his affairs, how he was even now on the eve of departing for the continent, in order to evade the increasing importunities of his creditors, he saw by the proud smile of confidence, that played upon her lovely mouth, as leaning on the arm that encircled her, she raised her face to his, her eyes, now soft and liquid, beaming with happiness, how little she dreaded opposition---how slightly she estimated any of the evils he enumerated.

“ I am my father's heiress,” she exclaimed,

“ all that I have will be yours Harry, and if it were not so, think you I would not gladly share exile and poverty with *you* ?”

Again he pressed her to his heart, as with fervour he cried :

“ Then by heaven, my sweet girl, nought shall separate us but death !”

She laid her head on his shoulder, and by an answering smile sealed the contract.

“ That is a rash vow Mr. Percy !” said a stern voice behind them, and, ere the words had died away on the speaker’s lips, Maud was disengaged from her lover’s embrace--had raised her head from its resting place ; and abashed and disconcerted, they stood side-by-side enduring the severe, cold gaze of Mr. Sutherland.

However a very short interval sufficed to restore the man of the world, to self-composure and ease of manner. He took the hand of Maud, and leading her to her father, with the frank, unembarrassed air of a person wholly uncon-

scious of having given offence, confessed his well requited attachment to his daughter.

“ And now my dear Mark,” he added with a smile, “ we only desire to receive from your lips a confirmation of our happiness, your consent to bestow your precious child on one, who, however blameable his life may hitherto have been, solemnly promises that the whole study of his future existence, shall be to promote her welfare—to become worthy of possessing so bright a treasure,” and again he pressed her hand to his heart.

And Maud whilst he spoke regained her composure, and had raised her graceful form, as if in defiance of rebuke or opposition.

Mr. Sutherland allowed Percy to speak without interruption; he was silent whilst with his usual rapidity and exaggeration of expression, the excited man poured forth an energetic defence and declaration of his passion.

Harry Percy was gifted with an extraordinary flow of words, and most emphatic

enunciation; the torrent of his eloquence, was usually effective and overpowering, but in the present instance it made no impression upon his listener, who at length in a stern, cold voice spoke.

“A treasure acquired by perfidious means, can never prove a blessing. My daughter, with my consent, Percy shall never be yours—such is my determination. But it may be as well for you to follow me to my study, where in a very short space of time, we may definitively settle this affair--and with *you* Maud I will speak presently.”

Percy followed him, after darting an encouraging look at the beautiful girl, who stood with distended eyes and quivering lips, tightly clenching the marble statue, the pale hue of which she resembled, and against which she leant for support.

Indignant as Mr. Sutherland had felt, the manner in which Harry Percy received his expressions of displeasure, in a measure

disarmed him. In the address of this finished man of the world, there was a gentlemanly bearing — a seeming openness — a fluency of expression, engendered by deceit, for he scrupled not to express in the highest degree of exaggeration, sentiments which he really did not feel; there was nothing, however preposterous, that he scrupled not to assert; nevertheless few could listen to him unmoved — few indeed! On the present occasion, Harry Percy's tact was, not to endeavour to exculpate himself, except by pleading the strength of his love. Frankly he confessed he had acted unworthily, spared not himself—cursed his wretched fate, which seemed ever to lead him into error—called himself a wretched—unfortunate—lost creature — doomed to ruin—his fortune—his hopes all—all blasted!

His eyes were full of tears, and his voice trembled, when he acknowledged the justice of the sentence pronounced by Mr. Sutherland,

which condemned him to put an end to his hopes of ever calling Maud his wife. Apparently he listened with patient sadness, and despairing anguish to the decree, that he should immediately depart from the spot where he had so injuriously employed his time. Yes, that very evening he would shew his repentance, by tearing himself away from her he adored—and a few more days would find him a solitary wanderer—a wretched exile, in a foreign land. He however sued for a farewell interview with Maud, and so well did he act his part—so contrite—so vehement were his expressions of compunction, that Mr. Sutherland's kind heart was moved, and Maud was summoned to their presence.

Proudly, with a cheek flushed to the brightest crimson, she entered, and stood before her father—not as a culprit to hear her doom, but like a queen to demand her lawful right.

Harry Percy, taking her hand, with all the

language of tenderness he could possibly throw into those

“ Eyes of most expressive blue,”

gazed upon her for a moment ; then in tones of the deepest despondency, disclosed to her the entire failure of his hopes—her father's irrevocable determination, and final sentence.

“ Dearest Maud,” he ended by saying, “ I can only acknowledge the wisdom of that sentence. I had indeed, madly dared to aspire to bliss too great for one so unworthy of possessing it—for your dear sake I leave you—perhaps for ever ! I only ask, and surely your father will not deny me this last request—I only ask that you will remember me in your prayers, as one who loved ‘ not wisely, but too well’—that you will pity and forgive me.”

He pressed her in a long, fervent embrace, and when again she raised her head, and had in a degree recovered from the sudden dismay occasioned by this unexpected scene—he was gone !

Harry Percy during that embrace, had contrived to whisper in her ear, other words unheard by her father. "My sweet girl, think not that I will leave you thus—we shall meet again ere I depart."

But she scarcely heeded or comprehended them—she only knew that he was gone ; without a struggle he had relinquished—abandoned her, and the blood forsook her cheek, and her bosom heaved convulsively, though she firmly compressed her quivering lips, and grasped the table near her, in order to conceal the emotion, which pride forbade her to manifest to her father.

"Come here Maud," the latter began, after looking sadly on her for a moment. "Fear no reproaches from me — I only trust, poor child ! that hereafter you may never have cause to repent, having cast from you a love like that of Arthur Balfour's—of having deceived him—and all of us. You cannot now appreciate the propriety of the line I have

taken, but in firmly insisting on the dismissal of the object of your infatuation, I consider that I have saved you from certain misery. Maud, I again declare, as I have done before, little dreaming under what circumstances I should have to repeat it, that rather than see you the bride of Harry Percy, I would prefer following you to the grave—young—beloved as you are. My child, I am not taking a worldly view of the case alone—although I must candidly tell you that his wife would never be my heiress. The disposition of my property is left to my own free will, entirely in my own power—and think you, that I will give the inheritance of my forefathers to be squandered, and injured, like the fortune once possessed by Harry Percy? Never!—no gambler, shall ever own the venerated estate. Let us, however, drop this unhappy subject, and never renew it. Time, and the well regulated mind of my child, will be sure to remove the

THE GAMBLER'S WIFE.

effects of the pernicious feeling which for a time has sullied her young fancy," and he drew her towards him and affectionately kissed her.

But no softening expression—no answering pressure returned his caress; coldly she received it—and drawing up her head she said :

" One request, my father, I must be allowed to make ; it is that, henceforth, I may never be tormented by any solicitations or persuasions in favor of Arthur Balfour, and that I may be left in peace. I here declare that no one in the whole universe but *him*——I mean Harry Percy—shall ever call me wife."

" Maud, you speak like a wayward child," rejoined Mr. Sutherland, a shade of anger flushing his cheek, " but at this moment you are not in a state of mind to listen to reason, and I am ready to make every allowance for your excited feelings—but I also have a request to make—or rather at the risk of my heavy displeasure, I *command*, that neither by word, or deed, you grieve or disturb the peace

of your mother — that before her at least you abstain from any display of petulance or temper. However, in her present state of health I think and hope, that this is an unnecessary injunction. A child must indeed be unnatural who would not, particularly under the present circumstances, make every sacrifice—every exertion—to overcome selfish considerations. Maud, fear not any attempts on my part to force your inclinations !”

The countenance of the self-willed girl expressed as plainly as words could speak, “force *my* inclinations ! who would have the power to force *mine* ?”

Her father read what was passing in her mind — it wrung his heart, to mark the fierce, intractable spirit which, for the first time, shewed itself in the disposition of the child, who had been the idol of both parents.

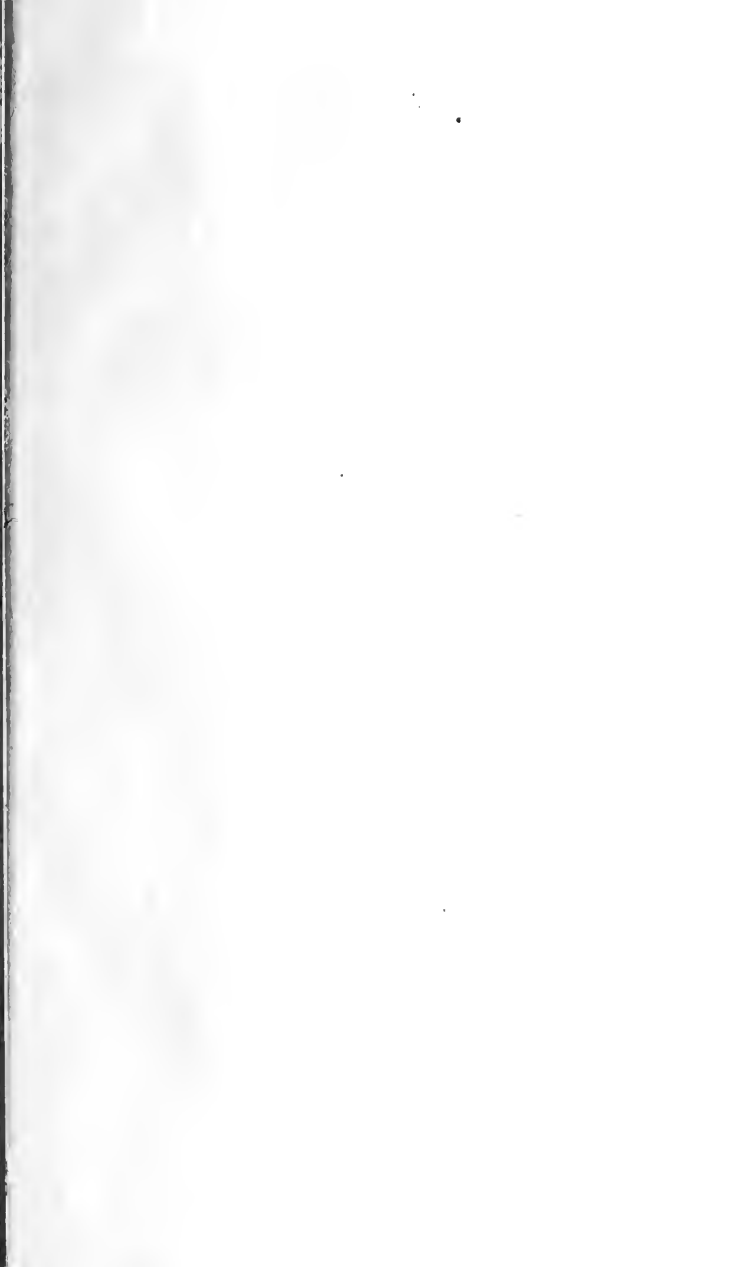
In a voice in which sorrow was mingled with reproach he said :

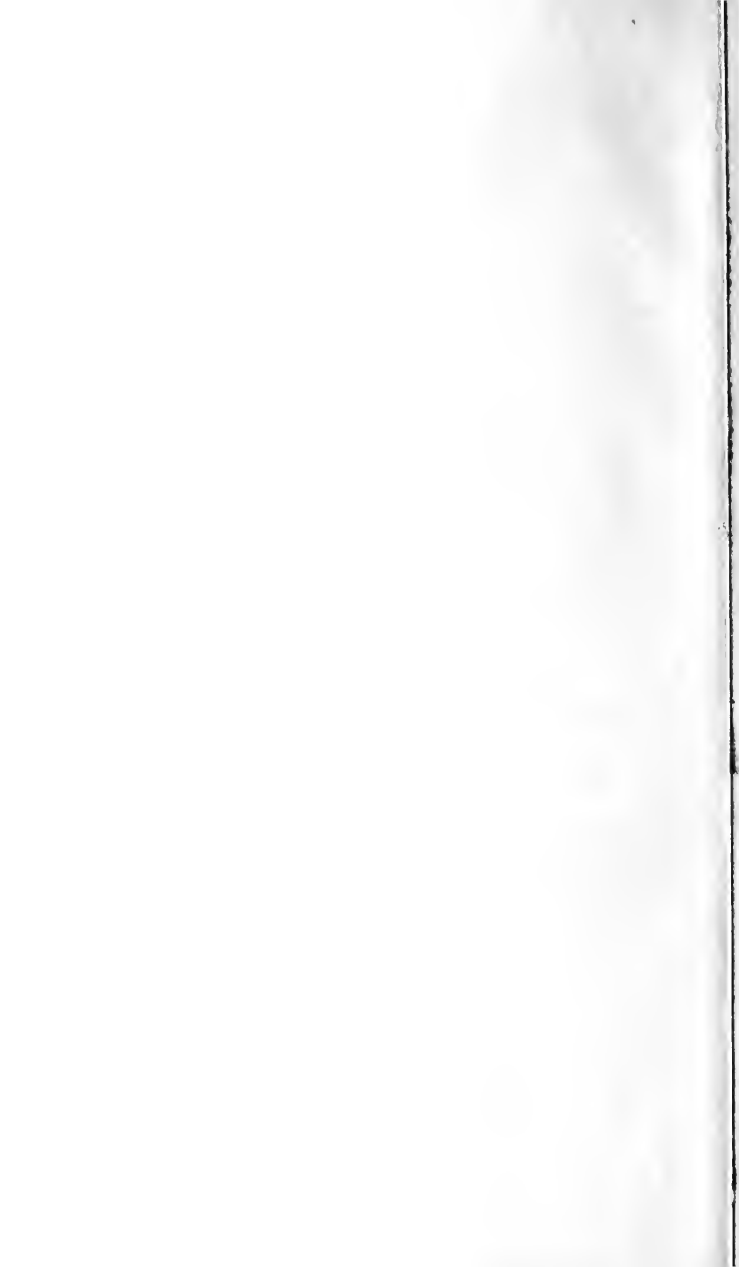
“ Maud, Arthur Balfour is too good to be forced on one, who I must say, has proved herself to be wholly unworthy of his affection—and I repeat the words of your dear mother, when, years ago, your grandfather expressed his hopes that you and Arthur might one day be united, ‘ Our children’s inclinations on the subject of marriage I could never wish to force.’ But, Maud, to restrain their inclinations, when they are prejudicial and hurtful to them, is a duty, to say nothing of the right which parents have to exercise authority. I trust, my poor child, you will hereafter thank me for the very act which now makes your heart rebel against me. But” continued Mr. Sutherland, his voice assuming a tone of sternness—“on one point I must warn you Maud—I can excuse much, my love for you will induce me to bend a great deal—but remember what I now say—were you to wound the heart of the dearest, and best of mothers by your

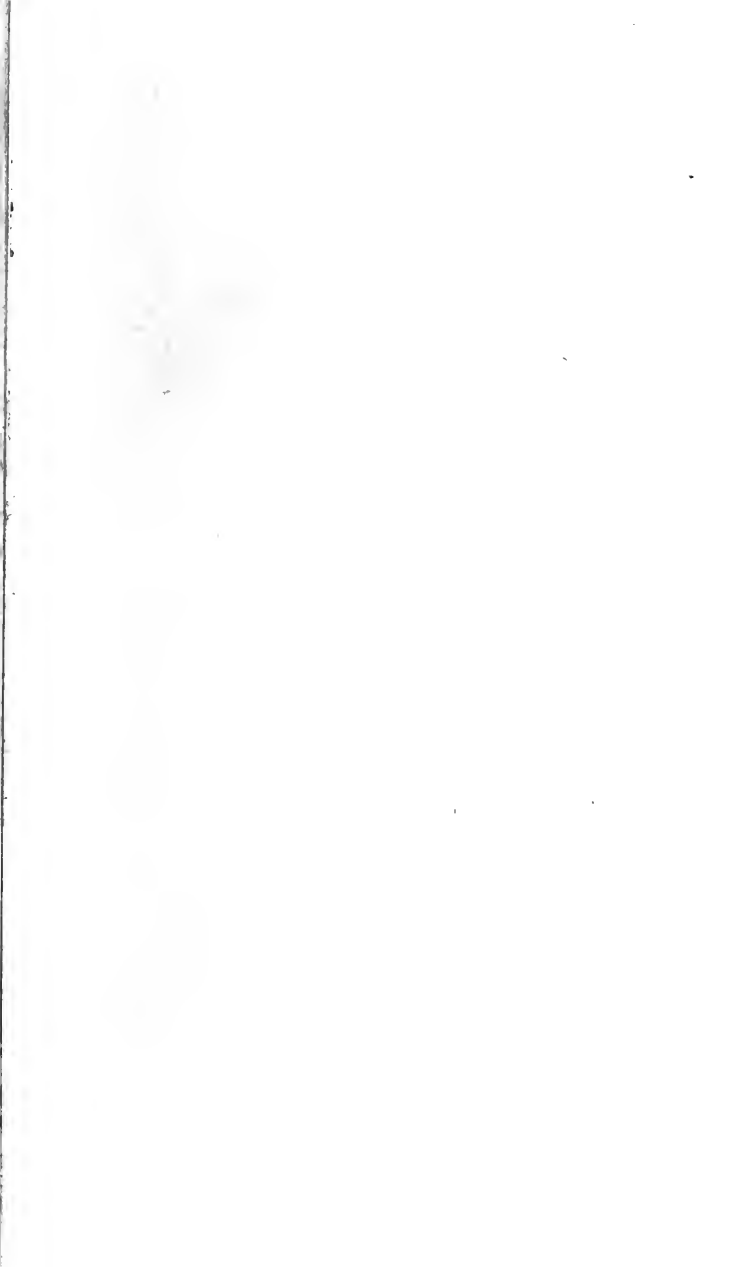
conduct, I solemnly caution you that I never could forget it--nor do I think I could ever—*forgive it*—so, Maud, beware !”

THE END OF VOL. I.

F. C. NEWBY, Printer, 72, Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square.







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